

THE SECOND

EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION.

For a general view of Thessalonica ; of the establishment of the church there ; of the character of the church, and of the design for which the apostle addressed these letters to it, see the Introduction to the First Epistle.

This epistle appears to have been written soon after the first, and from the same place—Corinth. See Intro. to the First Epistle, § 3. The proof of this indeed is not certain, for there are no marks of time or place in the epistle by which these points can be determined. The probability rests upon these grounds : (1.) That the same persons—Paul, Silas, and Timothy—are associated in both epistles, and are mentioned as being together at the time when they were written (1 Thess. i. 1 ; 2 Thess. i. 1) ; but as there is reason to believe that they did not continue long together, it is to be presumed that one epistle was written soon after the other. (2.) Paul refers to an error which had grown up, apparently in consequence of a misunderstanding of his first epistle (chap. ii. 1, 2) ; an error which he regarded as of great magnitude, and which was producing very unhappy results (chap. iii. 11, 12), and it was natural that he should hasten to correct that error as soon as possible. (3.) There is some probability, as Benson has remarked, that the epistle was written *before* the troubles came upon him at Corinth under the administration of Gallio (Acts xviii. 12—16), and yet that he saw that the storm was approaching, and hints at it in chap. ii. 2, “And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.” If so, this epistle was written but a few months at farthest after the first. We may regard the evidence, therefore, as sufficiently clear, that this epistle was written at Corinth some time during the latter part of A. D. 53, or the beginning of A. D. 54.

There is little doubt as to the design for which it was written. Either by a false interpretation of his former epistle, or by an epistle forged in his name and sent to them, the opinion had become prevalent in the church at Thessalonica that the Saviour was about to appear, and that the end of the world was at hand ; see chap. ii. 2, comp. Hug’s Intro. § 94, and Stuart’s Notes on the same, pp. 741, seq. To correct this impression was the leading design of this epistle. Some had become alarmed, and were suffering from unnecessary apprehension (chap. ii. 2) ; and some, under the natural belief that labour then was useless, and that property was of no value, had given up all attention to their worldly concerns (chap. iii. 10, 11) ; and it was of the utmost importance that the error should be corrected. This was done in this second epistle, and in doing it, Paul, as was usual, intermingled several

other topics of importance, adapted to the condition of those to whom he wrote.

This epistle, though short, has great permanent value, and is indispensable to a proper understanding of the great doctrine of the Second Advent of the Redeemer. It was written, indeed, to correct an error in a single church, and at a particular time, but history has shown there is a tendency to that same error in all ages, and that there was need of some permanent inspired statement to check it. It was inferred from the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, that *he* meant to teach that the day of judgment was not far off. Had not this second epistle been written to correct that false interpretation, and to show what *was* his belief, it would have been charged on him that he was mistaken, and *then* the inference would have been naturally made that *all* the prophecies respecting that event were false. The distance between this and absolute infidelity, it is easy to see, is very small. Paul, by his prompt explanation, arrested that danger, and showed that he intended to teach no such doctrine as had been drawn from his first letter to them. This epistle, therefore, is of importance to show (1.) that the apostle did not believe, or mean to teach, that the end of the world was near. There are many expressions, indeed, which like those in First Thessalonians, would *seem* to imply that the apostle held that belief, *but the explanation of an inspired apostle of his own sentiments at the time, settled that matter.* No one has now a right to charge that belief on him, or on others who then used the same language. No one can pretend that they held the opinion that the end of the world was near. There is no stronger language on that subject in any of their writings than occurs in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, and Paul in the second epistle expressly says that he held no such opinion, and meant to teach no such thing. (2.) This epistle is a standing rebuke of the kind of interpretation which attempts to determine the time when the Saviour will come, and of all those theories which represent "the day of Christ as at hand." The declarations in the Scriptures are positive and abundant that the time of his appearing is not made known to mortals (Notes on Acts i. 7), and it is not possible now to make out a *stronger* argument to prove that that time is near, than could have been made out from the First Epistle to the Thessalonians; and yet Paul deemed it necessary to write them a second letter, expressly to show them that the interpretation which they put on his language was unauthorized. The truth is, that it was not the design of God to make known to men the exact time when the Lord Jesus will return to judgment; and all attempts since the time of Paul to settle that have failed, and all will doubtless continue to fail, as they always have done.

EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER I.

PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto ^a the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Grace ^b unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is

^a 1 Th.1.1, &c.

^b 1 Co.1.3.

CHAPTER I.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER.

This chapter comprises the following points:—

(1.) The salutation; ver. 1, 2.

(2.) An expression of thanks for the progress which the Thessalonians had made in piety, and especially for the manner in which they had been enabled to bear their trials; ver. 3, 4.

(3.) An assurance that the manner in which they had been enabled to bear their trials was an evidence that they were true Christians; ver. 5.

(4.) A declaration that those who had persecuted them, and all others who were wicked, would be punished when the Lord Jesus should come, and that when this should occur the righteous would appear in glory and honour; ver. 6—10.

(5.) The expression of an earnest desire that they might be prepared for the solemn scenes of that day; ver. 11, 12.

1, 2. *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy*; see Notes on 1 Thess. i. 1.

3. *We are bound to thank God always for you*; Notes on 1 Thess. i. 2. ¶ *As it is meet*. As it is fit or proper. ¶ *Because that your faith groweth exceedingly*. It would seem probable from this that Paul had heard from them since his first epistle

meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth:

4 So that we ourselves glory ^c in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; ^d

5 Which is ^e a manifest token

^c 2 Co.9.2, 1 Th.2.19,20.

^d Ja.5.11.

^e Ph.1.28.

was written. He had doubtless received intelligence of the error which prevailed among them respecting his views of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and of the progress which the truth was making, at the same time. ¶ *And the charity of every one of you all toward each other*. Your mutual love.

4. *So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God*. That is, we mention your example to other churches, and glory in it, as an evidence of what the gospel is fitted to do; see Notes on 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20; comp. Notes on 2 Cor. ix. 2. ¶ *For your patience*. Your patient endurance of trials. ¶ *And faith*. Fidelity, or constancy. You have shown unwavering confidence in God in your afflictions. ¶ *In all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure*; see Notes on 1 Thess. ii. 14; iv. 13. It would seem from this that the persecutions and trials to which the apostle referred in his first epistle were still continued.

5. Which is *a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God*. The word “which” is supplied by our translators, and there may be some doubt to what the apostle has reference as being “a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God.” The general sense seems to be, that the fact that they

of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer : ^a

6 Seeing ^b it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ;

^a Th.2.14 ; He.10.32,23. ^b Re.6.10.

were thus persecuted was an evidence that there would be a future judgment, when the righteous who were persecuted would be rewarded, and the wicked who persecuted them would be punished. The manner in which they bore their trials was an indication also of what the result would be in regard to them. Their patience and faith under persecutions were constantly showing that they would "be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they were called to suffer." It is evident that a *relative* must be supplied here, as our translators have done, but there has been a difference of view as to what it refers. Some suppose that it is to "*patience*," others to "*persecutions and tribulations*," and others to the *whole sentence* preceding. The latter is probably the true construction, and the sense is, that the endurance of affliction in a proper manner by the righteous is a proof that there will be a righteous judgment of God in the last day. (1.) It is evidence that there *will be* a future judgment—since the righteous here suffer so much, and the wicked triumph. (2.) These things are now permitted *in order* that the character may be developed, and that the reason of the sentence in the last day may be seen. (3.) The manner in which these afflictions are borne is an *evidence*—an *indication* (ἰνδύγμα) of what the results of the judgment will be. The word rendered "manifest token" (ἰνδύγμα), occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means an indication, token, proof—anything that *shows or points out* how a thing is, or is to be (from ἰνδύνυμι, to show, to point out). The meaning here is, therefore, that the course of events referred to—the persecutions which they endured, and the manner in which they were borne—furnished a proof that there would be a righteous judgment, and also afforded an indication of what the result of that judgment would be. We may, in general, learn

what will be the issues of the judgment in the case of an individual from the manner in which he bears trials. ¶ *Of the righteous judgment of God.* That there will be a just judgment hereafter. The crimes of the wicked who go unpunished on the earth, and the sufferings of the good who are unavenged, are a demonstration that there will be a judgment, when all these inequalities will be adjusted. ¶ *That ye may be counted worthy.* As the result of your affliction, that you may be *fitted* for the kingdom of God. This does not mean that Christians will *merit* heaven by their sufferings, but that they may show that they have such a character that there is a *fitness or propriety* that they should be admitted there. They may evince by their patience and resignation, by their deadness to the world and their holy lives, that they are not disqualified to enter into that kingdom where the redeemed are to dwell. No true Christian will ever feel that he is *worthy* on his own account, or that he has any *claim* to eternal life, yet he may have evidence that he has the characteristics to which God has promised salvation, and is fitted to dwell in heaven. ¶ *Of the kingdom of God.* In heaven, see Notes on Matt. iii. 2. ¶ *For which ye also suffer.* The sufferings which you now endure are because you are professed heirs of the kingdom ; that is, you are persecuted because you are Christians ; see 1 Thess. ii. 14.

6. *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.* The sense is, "There will be a future judgment, because it is proper that God should punish those who now persecute you. It is not right that they should go unpunished, and triumph for ever. It is not an *arbitrary* thing, a thing which is indifferent, a thing which may or may not be done ; it is a *just* and *proper* thing that the wicked should

7 And to you who are troubled, rest ^a with us; when the Lord ^a Re.14.13. ^b 1 Th.4.16; Jude 14.

Jesus ^b shall be revealed from heaven with ¹ his mighty angels. ¹ the angels of his power.

be punished." The doctrine is, that the future punishment of the wicked is *just* and *proper*; and that, *being* just and proper, it will be inflicted. Many suppose that there would be no justice in the eternal punishment of the wicked; that the threatening of that punishment is wholly arbitrary; that it might easily be dispensed with, and that *because* it is unjust it will *not* be inflicted, and need not be dreaded. But that it is just and proper, a very slight degree of reflection must show. For (1.) it is inconceivable that God should *threaten* such punishment unless it were just. How can it be reconciled with his perfections that he can hold up before mankind the assurance that any of them will be punished for ever, unless it be right that it should be so? Can we believe that he deliberately threatens what is wrong, or that, in the face of the universe, he publicly declares his intention to do what is wrong? (2.) Men themselves believe that it is *just* that the wicked should be punished. They are constantly making laws, and affixing penalties to them, and executing them, under the belief that it is right. Can they regard it as wrong in God to do the same thing? Can that be wrong in him which is right in themselves? (3.) If it is right to punish wickedness here, it is not wrong to punish it in the future world. There is nothing in the two *places* which can change the nature of what is done. If it is right for God to visit the sinner here with the tokens of his displeasure, there is nothing which can make it wrong to visit him in like manner in the future world. Why should that be wrong in another world which is right and proper in this? (4.) It will be a righteous thing for God to punish the wicked in a future state, for they are *not* always punished here as they deserve. No one can seriously maintain that there is an equal distribution of rewards and punishments on the earth. Many a man goes to the grave having received no adequate punish-

ment for his crimes. Many a murderer, pirate, robber, traitor, and plunderer of nations under the name of a conqueror, thus dies. No one can doubt that it would be a "just" thing to punish them here if they could be arrested. Why should it be any the less "just" to punish them when they enter another world? In like manner, many a man lives a life of profligacy; or is an open scoffer; or aims to cast off the government of God; or is a seducer of innocence; and yet lives in the midst of wealth, and goes down in calmness and peace to the grave; Ps. lxxiii. 3—5; Job xxi. 23—33. Why is it not "just" that such an one should be punished in the future world? comp. Ps. lxxiii. 16—20. But, if it is right that God should punish the wicked in the future world, it will be done. For (1.) there is nothing to hinder him from doing it. He has all power, and has all necessary means of inflicting punishment, entirely at his disposal. (2.) It would not be right not to do it. It is not right for a magistrate to treat the righteous and the wicked alike, or to show that he has as much regard to the one as to the other. (3.) It cannot be believed that God has uttered a threatening which he never *meant* to execute, or to appear before the universe as having held up before men the terror of the most awful punishment which *could* be inflicted, but which he never intended to carry into effect. Who could have confidence in such a Being? Who could know what to believe when he makes the most solemn declaration? (4.) The Judge of all the earth "will do right;" and if it is right to *declare* that "the wicked shall be turned into hell," it will not be wrong to *inflict* the sentence. And if, on the whole, it is *right* that the sinner should be punished, *it will be done*. ¶ *Them that trouble you.* Those who persecute you; see 1 Thess. ii. 14.

7. And to you who are troubled

8 In ^a flaming fire, ^b taking vengeance on them that know ^c not God, and ^d that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ :

^a He. 10.27; 2 Pe. 3.7.

^b 1 or, *yielding*.

^c De. 32.41 43.

^d Ps. 79.6; Zep. 1.6.

^e Ro. 2.8.

That is, "it will be a righteous thing for God to give to you who are persecuted *rest* in the last day." As it will be right and proper to punish the wicked, so it will be right to reward the good. It will not, however, be in precisely the same sense. The wicked will *deserve* all that they will suffer, but it cannot be said that the righteous will *deserve* the reward which they will receive. It will be right and proper, because (1.) there is a fitness that they who are the friends of God should be treated as such, or it is proper that he should show himself to be their friend; and (2.) because in this life this is not always clearly done. They are often less prospered, and less happy in their outward circumstances, than the wicked. There is, therefore, a propriety that in the future state God should manifest himself as their friend, and show to assembled worlds that he is not indifferent to character, or that wickedness does not deserve his smiles, and piety incur his frown. At the same time, however, it will be owing wholly to his grace that any are ever admitted to heaven. ¶ *Rest*. The future happiness of believers is often represented under the image of *rest*. It is rest like that of the weary labourer after his day of toil; rest, like that of the soldier after the hardships of a long and perilous march; rest, like the calm repose of one who has been racked with pain; see Notes on Heb. iv. 9. The word *rest* here (*ἀνις*) means a letting loose, a remission, a relaxation; and hence composure, quiet; 2 Cor. ii. 12; vii. 5. ¶ *With us*. That is, with Paul, Silas, and Timothy; ver. 1. It would increase the comfort of the Thessalonians derived from the anticipation of the future world, to reflect that they would meet their religious teachers and friends there. It always augments

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction ^e from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory ^f of his power;

^e Ph. 3.19; 2 Pe. 3.7.

^f Is. 2.19.

the anticipated joy of heaven to reflect that we are to share its blessedness with them. There is no envy among those who anticipate heaven; there will be none there. They who desire heaven at all, desire that it may be shared in the highest degree by all who are dear to them. ¶ *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven*. Shall appear; shall come from heaven; Notes, 1 Thess. iv. 6. ¶ *With his mighty angels*. Marg., *angels of his power*. So the Greek. The sense is, that angels of exalted rank and glory will accompany him; Notes on 1 Thess. iv. 16; Matt. xxiv. 31; xxv. 31.

8. *In flaming fire*. This is a circumstance which is not noticed in the account of his appearing in the parallel place in 1 Thess. iv. 16. The object of the apostle here seems to be to represent him as coming amidst vivid flashes of lightning. He is commonly described as coming in clouds, and to that common description there is here added the image of incessant lightnings, as if the whole heavens were illuminated with a continued blaze. ¶ *Taking vengeance*. Marg., *yielding*. Gr., *giving*. The word *vengeance* is used in the sense of *punishment*, for there cannot be in God what literally corresponds with the passion of *revenge*; comp. Notes on Rom. xii. 19. ¶ *On them that know not God*. On all who are strangers to him; that is, who are living in heathenish darkness, or who, having heard of him, have no practical acquaintance with him. ¶ *And that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Who do not embrace it, and practise its precepts in their lives; comp. Notes on Rom. ii. 9.

9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction*; see Notes on Matt. xxv. 41. 46. The word which is here rendered *destruction* (*ὀλεσθαι*), is dif-

10 When he shall come to be glorified ^a in his saints, and to be

^a Mat. 25. 31.

^b Ps. 68. 35.

ferent from that which occurs in Matt. xxv. 46, and which is there rendered *punishment*—*κόλασις*. The word *ἐλεῖσθαι*—*olethron*—occurs only here and in 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Thess. v. 3; 1 Tim. vi. 9; in each of which places it is rendered *destruction*. It does not denote annihilation, but is used in the same sense in which we use the word when we say that a thing is *destroyed*. Thus health is destroyed when it fails; property is destroyed when it is burned or sunk in the ocean; a limb is destroyed that is lost in battle; life is destroyed when one dies. In the case before us, the destruction, whatever it be, is (1.) to be continued for ever; and (2.) is to be of the nature of punishment. The meaning then must be, that the soul is destroyed as to the great purposes of its being—its enjoyment, dignity, honour, holiness, happiness. It will not be annihilated, but will live and linger on in destruction. It seems difficult to conceive how any one can profess to hold that this passage is a part of the word of God, and yet deny the doctrine of future eternal punishment. It would not be possible to state that doctrine in clearer language than this. It never is stated in clearer language in any creed or confession of faith, and if it be not true that the wicked will be punished for ever, it must be admitted that it would not have been possible to reveal the doctrine in human language. ¶ *From the presence of the Lord*. That is, a part of their punishment will consist in being banished from the immediate presence of the Lord. There is a sense in which God is everywhere present, and in that sense he will be in the world where the wicked will dwell, to punish them. But the phrase is also used to denote his more immediate presence; the place where are the symbols of his majesty and glory; the home of the holy and the blessed. It is in that sense that the word is used here, and the idea is, that it will be one of the

admirable ^b in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

circumstances contributing to the deeper woe of the place of punishment, that those who dwell there will be banished from that holy abode, and will never be permitted to enter there. ¶ *And from the glory of his power*. The meaning seems to be, that they will not be able to endure the manifestation of his power and majesty when he shall appear, but will be driven away by it into outer darkness; see chap. ii. 8. The Saviour, in describing his Second Advent, uses this language: "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;" Matt. xxiv. 30. There will be a great exhibition of both. The *power* will be seen in the convulsions of nature which will precede or attend him; in the resurrection of the dead; and in the bringing of all to judgment: and the *glory* will be seen in his own person; the dignity and number of his attendants; and the honour that shall then be conferred on him as the final Judge of all mankind. By the manifestation of that power and glory the wicked will be driven away into eternal ruin. They will not be able to stand before it, and though, in common with the righteous, they may see the majesty of the Redeemer in the last day, yet they will be driven away to witness it no more.

10. *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints*. That is, the redeemed in that day will be the means of promoting his glory, or the universe will see his glory manifested in their redemption. His chief glory as seen in that day will be connected with the fact that he has redeemed his people; and he will come in order that all the appropriate honour of such a work may then be manifested. He will be "glorified" then by the numbers that shall have been redeemed; by their patience in the trials through which they have passed; by the triumphs which religion shall have made on the earth; by their praises and songs, and

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy ^a of this calling or, *vouchsafe* ^a Col. 1. 12; Re. 3. 4.

by their ascent with him to the realms of blessedness. ¶ *And to be admired in all them that believe.* This may either mean that he will be admired among or by them that believe; or that the ground of the admiration which he will receive in that day will be what will be seen in them; that is, their graces, their numbers, their joys, their triumphs will be the occasion of producing admiration of him—for he will be regarded as the source of it all. Tindal renders it, “and to be made marvellous in all them that believe.” The latter interpretation seems to me to be the correct one. The general idea is, that Christ in that day will be manifested in a glorious manner, and that the source of his highest triumphs will be what is seen in the saints. His main honour when he returns to the world will not be the outward splendours which will attend his coming, nor the angels that will accompany him, nor the manifestation of his power over the elements, but the church which he has redeemed. It will then be seen that he is worthy of universal admiration, for having redeemed that church. He shall then be admired or glorified in his people, (1.) for having conceived the plan of redeeming them; (2.) for being willing to become incarnate and to die to save them; (3.) for the defence of his church in all its persecutions and trials; (4.) for raising his people from the dead; (5.) for the virtues and graces which they will exhibit in that day. This appropriate honour of Christ in the church has never yet been fully seen. His people on earth have, in general, most imperfectly reflected his image. They have in general been comparatively few in number, and scattered upon the earth. They have been poor and despised. Often they have been persecuted and regarded as the “filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things.” The honours of this world have been withheld from them. The great have regarded it as

ing, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power;

no honour to be identified with the church, and the proud have been ashamed to be enrolled among the followers of the Lamb. In the last day all this will be changed, and the assembled church will show to admiring worlds how great and glorious is its Redeemer, and how glorious was the work of redemption. ¶ *Because our testimony among you was believed.* The meaning of this seems to be, that they would be among the number of those who would in that day honour the Saviour, because they had embraced what the apostle had preached to them respecting these future scenes. Thus interpreted, this clause should be regarded as connected with ver. 7. “And to you it is a righteous thing that he should give rest with us, because our testimony among you was believed.” That is, you have shown that you are true Christians, and it is proper that you should partake of the triumphs and hopes of that day.

11. *Wherefore also we pray always for you;* Notes, 1 Thess. i. 2. ¶ *That our God would count you worthy of this calling.* Marg., “or, *vouchsafe.*” The meaning is, “that he would regard you as worthy of this calling;” see Notes on ver. 5. ¶ *Of this calling;* Notes, Eph. iv. 1. The “calling” here, is that which had brought them into the kingdom, and led them to become Christians. ¶ *And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness.* That is, make the work of salvation complete and effectual. Oldshausen has well expressed the sense: “May God fill you with all that good which is pleasing to him.” The thoughts in the passage are, (1.) that the purpose towards them on the part of God was one of “goodness” or benevolence; (2.) that there was a state of mind which would be regarded by him as pleasing, or as his “good pleasure;” and (3.) that Paul wished that this might be accomplished in them. He desired that there might be in them everything which would be pleasing to

12 That ^a the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in
a 1 Pa.1.7.

God, and which his benevolence was fitted to secure. ¶ *And the work of faith.* The work which faith is adapted to produce on the soul; see 1 John v. 4, 5. ¶ *With power.* Effectually, completely. The apostle prays that so much power may be exerted as will be sufficient to secure the object. The work of religion on the soul is always represented in the Bible as one of *power*.

12. *That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* That is, that the Lord Jesus himself may be honoured among you; the name often denoting the person. The idea is that the apostle wished that the Lord Jesus might be honoured among them by the fair application and development of the principles of his religion. ¶ *And ye in him.* That you may be regarded and treated as his friends when he shall come to judge the world. ¶ *According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.* That is, that you may experience all the honour which his grace is fitted to impart.

In view of the exposition given of this chapter, we may remark:—

(1.) That the wicked will certainly be punished when the Lord Jesus shall come to judgment. Words cannot reveal this truth more plainly than is done in this chapter, and if it is not to be so, then language has no meaning.

(2.) The punishment of the wicked will be eternal. It is impossible for language to teach that doctrine more clearly than is done in this chapter. If it were admitted to have been the intention of God to teach the doctrine of eternal punishment, it is impossible to conceive that he could have chosen more plain and positive language to express the doctrine than has been done here. Can it be, then, that he means to trifle with men on so solemn a subject, by using words which have no meaning?

(3.) It will greatly aggravate the punishment of the wicked that it will be “a *righteous thing*” for God thus to punish them. If they were to suf-

fer as martyrs; if in their sufferings they could feel that they were oppressed and crushed beneath mere power; if they could feel that they were right and that God was wrong; if they could get up a party in the universe against God, sympathizing with them as if they were wronged, the case would be changed. A man can endure suffering much more easily when he has a good conscience, and feels that he is right, than he can when he feels that what he endures is deserved. But the sinner in hell can never have this consolation. He will for ever feel that God is *right* and that he is wrong, and that every pang which he endures is deserved.

(4.) If it be a “righteous thing” that the wicked shall be punished, then they never can be saved by mere justice. No one will go to heaven because he *deserves* or *merits* it. All dependence on human merit, therefore, is taken away in the matter of salvation, and if the sinner is ever saved, it will be by *grace*, and not by *justice*.

(5.) If it is a “righteous thing” that the sinner should perish, he will perish. God will do right to all.

(6.) It is amazing that the mass of men have so little concern about their future condition. God has plainly revealed that he will destroy the wicked for ever, and that it will be a *righteous thing* for him to do it; and yet the mass of mankind are wholly unconcerned, and disregard all the solemn declarations of the Bible on this subject as if they were idle tales. One would suppose that the very possibility of eternal suffering would rouse all the sensibilities of the soul, and lead to the earnest inquiry whether it is not possible to avoid it. Yet the mass of men feel no concern in this inquiry. It is impossible to get them ever to *think* of it. We cannot get them even to ask the question, seriously, whether they themselves are to be happy or miserable to all eternity. This stupidity and indifference is the most unac-

CHAPTER II.

NOW we beseech you, brethren,
by the coming of our Lord

countable fact on earth, and probably distinguishes this world from all others.

(7.) It is *rational* to think of religion; to reflect on eternity; to be serious; to be *anxious* about the future state. If there is even a *possibility* that we may be miserable for ever, it is proper to be *serious* about it. And if there is a solemn declaration of God that it will be a "righteous thing" for him to punish the wicked, and that he *will* "punish them with everlasting destruction," assuredly the mind *should* be concerned. Is there anything more worthy the calm and sober attention of the human soul than such solemn declarations of the infinite God?

CHAPTER II.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER.

The main object of this chapter is to correct an erroneous impression which had been made on the minds of the Thessalonians respecting the second coming of the Saviour, either by his own former letter, or by one forged in his name. They had received the impression that that event was about to take place. This belief had produced an unhappy effect on their minds; ver. 2. It became, therefore, necessary to state the truth on the subject, in order to free their minds from alarm; and this purpose of the apostle leads to one of the most important prophecies in the New Testament. The chapter comprises the following points:—

I. An exhortation that they would not be alarmed or distressed by the expectation of the speedy coming of the Saviour; ver. 1, 2.

II. A statement of the truth that he would *not* soon appear, and of the characteristics of a great apostasy which must intervene before his advent; ver. 3—12.

In this part of the chapter, the apostle shows that he did *not* mean to teach that that event would soon happen, by stating that *before* that there would occur a most melancholy apostasy, which would require a con-

Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in

siderable time before it was matured.

(a) That day would not come until there should be a great apostasy, and a revelation of the man of sin; ver. 3.

(b) The character of this man of sin was to be such that it could not be mistaken: he would be opposed to God; would exalt himself above all that is called God; and would sit in the temple showing himself as God; ver. 4.

(c) There was a restraint then exercised which prevented the development of the great apostasy. There were indeed causes then at work which would lead to it, but they were then held in check, and God would restrain them until some future time, when he would suffer the man of sin to be revealed; ver. 5—7.

(d) When that time should come, then that "wicked" one would be revealed, with such marks that he could not be mistaken. His coming would be after the working of Satan, with power and signs and lying wonders, and under him there would be strong delusion, and the belief of a lie; ver. 8—12. This great foe of God was to be destroyed by the coming of the Saviour, and one object of his appearing would be to put an end to his dominion; ver. 8.

III. The apostle then says, that there was occasion for thankfulness to God, that he had chosen them to salvation, and not left them to be destroyed; ver. 13, 14.

IV. An exhortation to stand fast, and to maintain what they had been taught (ver. 15), and a prayer that God, who had given them a good hope, would comfort their hearts, closes the chapter; ver. 16, 17.

1. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The phrase "by the coming," is not here, as our translators seem to have supposed, a form of solemn adjuration. It is not common, if it ever occurs, in the Scriptures, to make a solemn adjuration in view of *an event*, and the

mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter,

as from us, as ^a that the day of Christ is at hand.

^a Mat. 24. 4-6.

connection here demands that we give to the phrase a different sense. It means, *respecting his coming*; and the idea of Paul is, "In regard to that great event of which I spoke to you in my former epistle—the coming of the Saviour—I beseech you not to be troubled, as if it were soon to happen. As his views had been misunderstood or misrepresented, he now proposes to show them that there was nothing in the true doctrine which should create alarm, as if he were about to appear. ¶ *And by our gathering together unto him.* There is manifest allusion here to what is said in the first epistle (chap. iv. 17), "then we shall be caught up together with them in the clouds;" and the meaning is, "in reference to our being gathered unto him, I beseech you not to be shaken in mind, as if that event were near."

2. *That ye be not soon shaken in mind.* The word here used signifies, properly, to be moved as a wave of the sea, or to be tossed upon the waves, as a vessel is. Then it means to be shaken in any way; see Mat. xi. 7; xxiv. 29; Luke vi. 38; Acts iv. 31; Heb. xii. 26. The reference here is to the agitation or alarm felt from the belief that the day of judgment would soon occur. It is uniformly said in the Scriptures, that the approach of the Lord Jesus to judge the world, will produce a great consternation and alarm. Mat. xxiv. 30, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." Rev. i. 7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him; and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Luke xxiii. 30, "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us;" comp. Isa. ii. 21, 22. Of the truth of this, there can be no doubt. We may *imagine* something of the effects which will be produced by the alarm caused in a community

when a belief prevails that the day of judgment is near. In a single year (1843) seventeen persons were admitted to the Lunatic Asylum in Worcester, Mass., who had become deranged in consequence of the expectation that the Lord Jesus was about to appear. It is easy to account for such facts, and no doubt, when the Lord Jesus shall actually come, the effect on the guilty world will be overwhelming. The apostle here says, also, that those who were Christians were "shaken in mind and troubled" by this anticipation. There are, doubtless, many true Christians who would be alarmed at such an event, as there are many who, like Hezekiah (Isa. xxxviii. 1, 2), are alarmed at the prospect of death. Many real Christians might, on the sudden occurrence of such an event, feel that they were not prepared, and be alarmed at the prospect of passing through the great trial which is to determine their everlasting destiny. It is no certain evidence of a want of piety to be alarmed at the approach of death. Our nature dreads death, and though there may be a well-founded hope of heaven, it will not always preserve a delicate physical frame from trembling when it comes. ¶ *Or be troubled.* That is, disturbed, or terrified. It would seem that this belief had produced much consternation among them. ¶ *Neither by spirit.* By any pretended spirit of prophecy. But whether this refers to the predictions of those who were false prophets in Thessalonica, or to something which it was alleged the apostle Paul had himself said there, and which was construed as meaning that the time was near, is not certain. This depends much on the question whether the phrase "as from us," refers only to the *letters* which had been sent to them, or also to the "word" and to the "spirit," here spoken of; see Oldshausen on the place. It would seem, from the connection, that *all* their consternation had been caused

by some misconception which had been put on the sentiments of Paul himself, for if there had been any other source of alarm, he would naturally have referred to it. It is probable, therefore, that allusion is made to some representation which had been given of what he had said under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and that the expectation that the end of the world was near, was supposed to be a doctrine of inspiration. Whether, however, the Thessalonians themselves put this construction on what he said, or whether those who had caused the alarm represented him as teaching this, cannot be determined. ¶ *Nor by word.* That is, by public instruction, or in preaching. It is evident that when the apostle was among them, this subject, from such causes, was prominent in his discourses; see ver. 5. It had been inferred, it seems, from what he said, that he meant to teach that the end of the world was near. ¶ *Nor by letter.* Either the one which he had before written to them—the First Epistle to the Thessalonians—or one which had been forged in his name. ¶ *As from us.* That is, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, who are united in writing the two epistles (1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1), and in whose names a letter would be forged, if one of this description were sent to them. It has been made a question, whether the apostle refers here to the former epistle which he had sent to them, or to a forged letter; and on this question critics have been about equally divided. The reasons for the former opinion may be seen in Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ, in loc.* The question is not very important, and perhaps cannot be easily settled. There are two or three circumstances, however, which seem to make it probable that he refers to an epistle which had been forged, and which had been pretended to be received from him. (1.) One is found in the expression “as from us.” If he had referred to his own former letter, it seems to me that the allusion would have been more distinct, and that the particle “as” (ὡς) would not have been used. This is such an expression as would

have been employed if the reference were to such a forged letter. (2.) A second circumstance is found in the expression in the next verse, “Let no man deceive you by any means,” which looks as if they were not led into this belief by their own interpretation of his former epistle, but by a deliberate attempt of some one to delude them on the subject. (3.) Perhaps a third circumstance would be found in the fact that it was not uncommon in early times of Christianity to attempt to impose forged writings on the churches. Nothing would be more natural for an impostor who wished to acquire influence, than to do this; and that it was often done is well known. That epistles were forged under the names of the apostles, appears very probable, as Benson has remarked, from chap. iii. 17; Gal. vi. 11; and Philem. 19. There are, indeed, none of those forged epistles extant which were composed in the time of the apostles, but there is extant an epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, besides the two which we have; another to the Laodiceans, and six of Paul's epistles to Seneca—all of which are undoubted forgeries; see Benson *in loc.* If Paul, however, here refers to his former epistle, the reference is doubtless to 1 Thess. iv. 15, and v. 2, 3, 4, which might easily be understood as teaching that the end of the world was near, and to which those who maintained that opinion might appeal with great plausibility. We have, however, the authority of the apostle himself that he meant to teach no such thing. ¶ *As that the day of Christ is at hand.* The time when he would appear—called “the day of Christ,” because it would be appointed especially for the manifestation of his glory. The phrase “at hand,” means *near*. Grotius supposes that it denotes *that same year*, and refers for proof to Rom. viii. 38; 1 Cor. iii. 22; Gal. i. 4. Heb. ix. 9. If so, the attempt to fix the day was an early indication of the desire to determine *the very time* of his appearing—a disposition which has been so common since, and which has led into so many sad mistakes.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except ^a there come a

^a 1 Ti. 4.1.

falling away first, and that man of sin ^b be revealed, the ^c son of perdition:

^b Da. 7.25.

^c John 17.12.

3. *Let no man deceive you by any means.* That is, respecting the coming of the Lord Jesus. This implies that there were then *attempts* to deceive, and that it was of great importance for Christians to be on their guard. The result has shown that there is almost no subject on which caution is more proper, and on which men are more liable to delusion. The *means* then resorted to for deception appear from the previous verse to have been either an appeal to a pretended verbal message from the apostle, or a pretended letter from him. The means now, consist of a claim to uncommon wisdom in the interpretation of obscure prophecies of the Scriptures. The necessity for the *caution* here given has not ceased. ¶ *For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.* Until an *apostasy* (*ἀποστασία*) shall have occurred—the *great apostasy*. There is scarcely any passage of the New Testament which has given occasion to greater diversity of opinion than this. Though the reference seems to be plain, and there is scarcely *any* prophecy of the Bible apparently more obvious and easy in its general interpretation; yet it is proper to mention some of the opinions which have been entertained of it. Some have referred it to a great apostasy from the Christian church, particularly on account of persecution, which would occur before the destruction of Jerusalem. The “coming of the Lord” they suppose refers to the destruction of the holy city, and according to this, the meaning is, that there would be a great apostasy before that event would take place. Of this opinion was Vitringa, who refers the “apostasy” to a great defection from the faith which took place between the time of Nero and Trajan. Whitby also refers it to an event which was to take place before the destruction of Jerusalem, and supposes that the apostasy would consist in a return from the Christian to the

Jewish faith by multitudes of professed converts. The “man of sin,” according to him, means the Jewish nation, so characterized on account of its eminent wickedness. Hammond explains the apostasy by the defection to the Gnostics, by the arts of Simon Magus, whom he supposes to be the man of sin, and by the “day of the Lord” he also understands the destruction of Jerusalem. Grotius takes Caius Cesar or Caligula, to be the man of sin, and by the apostasy he understands his abominable wickedness. In the beginning of his government, he says, his plans of iniquity were concealed, and the hopes of all were excited in regard to his reign; but his secret iniquity was subsequently “revealed,” and his true character understood. Wetstein understands by the “man of sin,” “Titus and the Flavian house.” He says that he does not understand it of the Roman Pontiff, who “is not one such as the demonstrative pronoun thrice repeated designates, and who neither sits in the temple of God, nor calls himself God, nor Caius, nor Simon Gioriae, nor any Jewish impostor, nor Simon Magus.” Koppe refers it to the King mentioned in Dan. xi. 36. According to him, the reference is to a great apostasy of the Jews from the worship of God, and the “man of sin” is the Jewish people. Others have supposed that the reference is to Mohammed, and that the main characteristics of the prophecy may be found in him. Of the Papists, a part affirm that the apostasy is the falling away from Rome in the time of the Reformation, but the greater portion suppose that the allusion is to Antichrist, who, they say, will appear in the world before the great day of judgment, to combat religion and the saints. See these opinions stated at length, and examined, in Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, Diss. xxii. Some more recent expositors have referred it to Napoleon Bonaparte,

and some (as Oldshausen) suppose that it refers to some one who has not yet appeared, in whom all the characteristics here specified will be found united. Most Protestant commentators have referred it to the great apostasy under the Papacy, and, by the "man of sin," they suppose there is allusion to the Roman Pontiff, the Pope. It is evident that we are in better circumstances to understand the passage than those were who immediately succeeded the apostles. Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the epistle was written, and the "day of the Lord" has not yet come, and we have an opportunity of inquiring, whether in all that long tract of time any one man can be found, or any series of men have arisen, to whom the description here given is applicable. If so, it is in accordance with all the proper rules of interpreting prophecy, to make such an application. If it is fairly applicable to the Papacy, and cannot be applied in its great features to anything else, it is proper to regard it as having such an original reference. Happily, the expressions which are used by the apostle are, in themselves, not difficult of interpretation, and all that the expositor has to do is, to ascertain whether in any one great apostasy all the things here mentioned have occurred. If so, it is fair to apply the prophecy to such an event; if not so, we must wait still for its fulfilment. The word rendered "falling away" (*ἀποστασία*, *apostasy*), is of so general a character, that it may be applied to any departure from the faith as it was received in the time of the apostles. It occurs in the New Testament only here and in Acts xxi. 21, where it is rendered "to forsake"—"thou teachest all the Jews which are among us to forsake Moses"—*apostasy from Moses*—*ἀποστασίαν ἀπὸ Μωϋσίου*. The word means a departing from, or a defection; see the verb used in 1 Tim. iv. 1, "Some shall depart from the faith"—*ἀποστήσονται*; comp. Notes on that passage; see also Heb. iii. 12; Luke viii. 13; Acts v. 37. The reference here is evidently to some general falling away,

or to some great religious apostasy that was to occur, and which would be under one head, leader, or dynasty, and which would involve many in the same departure from the faith, and in the same destruction. The use of the article here, "*the apostasy*" (Gr.), Erasmus remarks, "signifies that great and before-predicted apostasy." It is evidently emphatic, showing that there had been a reference to this before, or that they understood well that there was to be such an apostasy. Paul says (ver. 5), that when he was with them, he had told them of these things. The writers in the New Testament often speak of such a defection under the name of Antichrist; see Rev. xiii. 14; 1 John ii. 18, 22; iv. 3; 2 John 7. ¶ *And that man of sin.* This is a Hebraism, meaning a man of eminent wickedness; one distinguished for depravity; comp. John xvii. 12; Prov. vi. 12, in Heb. The use of the article here—*ὁ ἀνδραπαρῶς*—"the man of sin," is also emphatic, as in the reference to "*the falling away*," and shows that there is allusion to one of whom they had before heard, and whose character was well known; who would be the wicked one by way of eminence; see also ver. 8, "*that wicked*"—*ὁ ἀνομος*. There are two general questions in regard to the proper interpretation of this appellative; the one is, whether it refers to an individual, or to a series of individuals of the same general character, aiming at the accomplishment of the same plans; and the other is, whether there has been any individual, or any series of individuals, since the time of the apostle, who, by eminence, deserved to be called "*the man of sin*." That the phrase, "*the man of sin*," may refer to a succession of men of the same general character, and that it does so refer here, is evident from the following considerations: (1.) The word "king" is used in Dan. vii. 25; xi. 36, to which places Paul seems to allude, to denote a succession of kings. (2.) The same is true of the *beast* mentioned in Dan. vii., viii., Rev. xiii., representing a kingdom or empire through its successive changes and revolutions, (3.)

The same is true of the "*woman arrayed in purple and scarlet*" (Rev. xvii. 4), which cannot refer to a single woman, but is the emblem of a continued corrupt administration. (4.) It is clear that a succession is intended here, because the work assigned to "the man of sin," cannot be supposed to be that which could be accomplished by a single individual. The statement of the apostle is, that there were then tendencies to such an apostasy, and that the "man of sin" would be revealed at no distant period, and yet that he would continue his work of "lying wonders" until the coming of the Saviour. In regard to this "man of sin," it may be further observed, (1.) that his appearing was to be *preceded* by "the great apostasy;" and (2.) that he was to continue and perpetuate it. His rise was to be owing to a great departure from the faith, and then he was to be the principal agent in continuing it by "signs and lying wonders." He was not himself to *originate* the defection, but was to be the creation, or result of it. He was to rise upon it, or grow out of it, and, by artful arrangements adapted to that purpose, was to perpetuate it. The question then is, to whom this phrase, descriptive of a succession of individuals so eminent for wickedness that the name "*the man of sin*" could be applied, was designed by the spirit of inspiration to refer. Bishop Newton has shown that it cannot refer to Caligula, to Simon Magus, to the revolt of the Jews from the Romans, or to the revolt of the Jews from the faith, or to the Flavian family, or to Luther, as some of the papists suppose, or to one man who will appear just before the end of the world, as others of the Romanists suppose; see his *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, xxii. pp. 393—402; comp. Oldshausen, *in loc.* The argument is too long to be inserted here. But can it be referred to the papacy: Can it denote the pope of Rome, meaning not a single pope, but the succession? If all the circumstances of the entire passage can be shown to be fairly applicable to him, or if it can be shown

that all that is fairly implied in the *language* used here has received a fulfilment in him, then it is proper to regard it as having been designed to be so applied, and then this may be numbered among the prophecies that are in part fulfilled. The question now is on the applicability of the phrase "the man of sin" to the pope. That his rise was *preceded* by a great apostasy, or departure from the purity of the simple gospel, as revealed in the New Testament, cannot reasonably be doubted by any one acquainted with the history of the church. That he is the *creation* or *result* of that apostasy, is equally clear. That he is the grand agent in *continuing* it, is equally manifest. Is the phrase itself one that is properly applicable to him? Is it proper to speak of the pope of Rome, as he has actually appeared, as "*the man of sin*?" In reply to this, it might be sufficient to refer to the general character of the papacy, and to its influence in upholding and perpetuating various forms of iniquity in the world. It would be easy to show that there has been no dynasty or system that has contributed so much to uphold and perpetuate sins of various kinds on the earth, as the papacy. No other one has been so extensively and so long the patron of superstition; and there are vices of the grossest character which have all along been fostered by its system of celibacy, indulgences, monasteries, and absolutions. But it would be a better illustration of the meaning of the phrase "man of sin," as applicable to the pope of Rome, to look at the general character of the popes themselves. Though there may have been some exceptions, yet there never has been a *succession* of men of so decidedly wicked character, as have occupied the papal throne since the great apostasy commenced. A very few references to the characters of the popes will furnish an illustration of this point. Pope Vigilius waded to the pontifical throne through the blood of his predecessor. Pope Joan—the Roman Catholic writers tell us—a female in disguise, was elected and confirmed pope, as John VIII.

4 Who opposeth and exalteth^a

a Is. 14. 13; Re. 13. 6.

Platina says, that "she became with child by some of those that were round about her; that she miscarried, and died on her way from the Lateran to the temple." Pope Marcellinus sacrificed to idols. Concerning pope Honorius, the council of Constantinople decreed, "We have caused Honorius, the late pope of Old Rome, to be *accursed*; for that in all things he followed the mind of Sergius the *heretic*, and confirmed his wicked doctrines." The council of Basil thus condemned pope Eugenius; "We condemn and depose pope Eugenius, a despiser of the holy canons; a disturber of the peace and unity of the church of God; a notorious offender of the whole universal church; a Simonist; a perjurer; a man incorrigible; a schismatic; a man fallen from the faith, and a wilful heretic." Pope John II., was publicly charged at Rome with incest. Pope John XIII. usurped the Pontificate, spent his time in hunting, in lasciviousness, and monstrous forms of vice; he fled from the trial to which he was summoned, and was stabbed, being taken in the act of adultery. Pope Sixtus IV. licensed brothels at Rome. Pope Alexander VI. was, as a Roman Catholic historian says, "one of the greatest and most horrible monsters in nature that could scandalize the holy chair. His beastly morals, his immense ambition, his insatiable avarice, his detestable cruelty, his furious lusts, and monstrous incest with his daughter Lucretia, are, at large, described by Guicciardini Ciacconius, and other authentic papal historians." Of the popes, Platina, a Roman Catholic, says: "The chair of Saint Peter was usurped, rather than possessed, by monsters of wickedness, ambition, and bribery. They left no wickedness unpractised;" see the New Englander, April, 1844, pp. 285, 286. To no succession of men who have ever lived could the appellation, "*the man of sin*," be applied with so much propriety as to this succession. Yet they claim to have been

himself above all that is called God,

the true "successors" of the apostles, and there are *Protestants* that deem it of essential importance to be able to show that they have derived the true "succession" through such men. ¶ *Be revealed.* Be made manifest. There were, at the time when the apostle wrote, two remarkable things, (1.) that there was already a *tendency* to such an apostasy as he spoke of; and (2.) there was something which as yet prevented the appearance or the rise of the man of sin; ver. 7. When the hindrance which then existed should be taken out of the way, he would be manifested; see Notes on ver. 7. ¶ *The son of perdition.* This is the same appellation which the Saviour bestowed on Judas; see it explained in the Notes on John xviii 12. It may mean either that he would be the cause of ruin to others, or that he would himself be devoted to destruction. It would seem here rather to be used in the latter sense, though this is not absolutely certain. The phrase, whichever interpretation be adopted, is used to denote one of eminent wickedness.

4. *Who opposeth.* That is, he is distinguished as an *opposer* of the great system which God has revealed for human salvation, and of those who would serve God in purity in the gospel of his Son. No Protestant will doubt that this has been the character of the papacy. The opposition of the general system to the gospel; the persecution of Wickliffe, of John Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of the Waldenses and the Reformers; the Inquisition, the cruelties in the reign of Mary, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew in France, are obvious illustrations of this. ¶ *And exalteth himself above all that is called God.* That is, whether among the heathens or the Jews; above a false God, or the true God. This could be true only of one who set aside the divine laws; who undertook to legislate where God only has a right to legislate, and whose legislation was contrary to that of God. Any claim of a

or that is worshipped ; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of

God, showing himself that he is God.

dominion over conscience ; or any arrangement to set aside the divine laws, and to render them nugatory, would correspond with what is implied in this description. It cannot be supposed that any one would openly *claim* to be superior to God, but the sense must be, that the enactments and ordinances of the "man of sin" would pertain to the province in which God only can legislate, and that the ordinances made by him would be such as to render nugatory the divine laws, by appointing others in their place. No one can reasonably doubt that all that is here affirmed may be found in the claims of the pope of Rome. The assumptions of the papacy have related to the following things: (1.) To authority above all the inferior orders of the priesthood—above all pastors, bishops, and primates. (2.) Authority above all kings and emperors, "deposing some, and advancing others, obliging them to prostrate themselves before him, to kiss his toe, to hold his stirrup, to wait barefooted at his gate, treading even upon the neck, and kicking off the imperial crown with his foot."—*Newton*. Thus Gregory VII. made Henry IV. wait barefooted at his gate. Thus Alexander III. trod upon the neck of Alexander I. Thus Celestin kicked off the imperial crown of Henry VI. Thus the right was claimed, and asserted, of laying nations under interdict, of deposing kings, and of absolving their subjects from their oaths of allegiance. And thus the pope claimed the right over all unknown lands that might be discovered by Columbus, and apportioned the New World as he pleased—in all these things claiming prerogatives which can appertain only to God. (3.) To authority over the *conscience*, in matters which can pertain only to God himself, and where he only can legislate. Thus it has been, and is, one of the claims set up for the pope that he is infallible. Thus he "forbids what God has commanded," as the marriage of the clergy, communion in both kinds, the use of the Scrip-

tures for the common people. Thus he has set aside the second commandment by the appointment of image-worship ; and thus he claims the power of the remission of sins. Multitudes of things which Christ allows his people are forbidden by the papacy, and many things are enjoined, or allowed, directly contrary to the divine legislation. ¶ *Or that is worshipped.* *εἰσακμα*. This word means *an object of worship*; see Acts xvii. 3, where it is rendered *devotions*. It may be applied to the worship of a heathen divinity, or of the true God. "It may refer to a person, an idol, or a place. Probably Paul refers here to the heroes and other subordinate divinities of the heathen mythology." *Oldshausen*. No one can doubt that the pope has claimed higher honours, as the vicegerent of Christ, than was ever rendered in the ancient "hero worship." ¶ *So that he, as God.* That is, claiming the honours due to God. This expression would not imply that he actually claimed *to be* the true God, but only that he sits in the temple, and manifests himself *as if* he were God. He claims such honours and such reverence as the true God *would* if he should appear in human form. It should be observed here, however, that there is much reason to doubt the genuineness of this phrase—"as God"—*ὡς Θεὸς*. Mill supposes that it was inserted from the context. It is marked with an asterisk in the Vulgate, the Coptic, and the Syriac, and is omitted by many of the fathers; see Mill and Wetstein. It is rejected by Griesbach and Lachmann, and marked as doubtful by Hahn. It is defended, however, by Matthæi, Koppe, Knapp, and Schott. The sense is not materially affected whether it be regarded as genuine or not. ¶ *Sitteth in the temple of God.* That is, in the Christian church. It is by no means necessary to understand this of the temple at Jerusalem, which was standing at the time this epistle was written, for (1.) the phrase "the temple of God" is several times used with

reference to the Christian church, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21; Rev. iii. 12; and (2.) the temple was the proper symbol of the church, and an apostle trained amidst the Hebrew institutions would naturally speak of the church as the temple of God. The temple at Jerusalem was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God on earth. When the Christian church was founded, it was spoken of as the peculiar dwelling-place of God; see the passages referred to above. He dwelt among his people. He was with them, and walked with them, and manifested himself among them—as he had done in the ancient temple. The usage in the New Testament would not lead us to restrict this language to an *edifice*, or a “church,” as the word is now commonly used, but rather to suppose that it denotes the church as a society, and the idea is, that the Antichrist here referred to would present himself in the midst of that church as claiming the honours due to God alone. In the temple at Jerusalem, God himself presided. There he gave laws to his people; there he manifested himself as God; and there he was worshipped. The reign of the “man of sin” would be *as if* he should sit there. In the Christian church he would usurp the place which God had occupied in the temple. He would claim divine attributes and homage. He would give laws and responses as God did there. He would be regarded as the head of all ecclesiastical power; the source from which all authority emanated; the same in the Christian church which God himself was in the temple. This does not then refer primarily to the pope as sitting in any particular church on any particular occasion, but to his claiming in the church of Christ the authority and homage which God had in the temple at Jerusalem. In whatever place, whether in a cathedral or elsewhere, this authority should be exercised, all that the language here conveys would be fulfilled. No one can fail to see that the authority claimed by the pope of Rome, meets the full force of the language

used here by the apostle. ¶ *Showing himself that he is God.* This does not necessarily mean that he actually, in so many words, claimed *to be God*; but that he usurped the place of God, and claimed the prerogatives of God. If the names of God are given to him, or are claimed by him; if he receives the honours due to God; if he asserts a dominion like that of God, then all that the language fairly implies will be fulfilled. The following expressions, applied to the pope of Rome by Catholic writers, without any rebuke from the papacy, will show how entirely applicable this is to the pretended head of the church. He has been styled “Our Lord God the pope; another God upon earth; king of kings and lord of lords. The same is the dominion of God and the pope. To believe that our Lord God the pope might not decree as he decreed, is heresy. The power of the pope is greater than all created power, and extends itself to things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal. The pope doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things unlawful, and is more than God;” see the authority for these extraordinary declarations in bishop Newton on the Prophecies, xxii. How can it be doubted that the reference here is to the papacy? Language could not be plainer, and it is not possible to conceive that anything can ever occur which would furnish a more manifest fulfilment of this prophecy. Indeed, interpreted by the claims of the papacy, it stands among the very clearest of all the predictions in the Sacred Scriptures.

5. *Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?* The whole subject of the second advent of the Saviour seems to have constituted an important part of the instructions of Paul when at Thessalonica. He now refers them to what he had told them respecting the great apostasy, to show that his views had not changed, and that he did not mean to have them understand that the world would soon come to an end. He had stated these things to them implying that a considerable interval *must* elapse before the Sa-

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you those things ?

viour would appear. Much of the *obscurity* of this prophecy arises from the fact, that the apostle alludes to things which he had told them when with them, of which we have now no knowledge. Hence, what would be perfectly clear to them, on reading this letter, is now difficult to be understood.

6, *And now ye know what withholdeth.* Marg., *holdeth.* The reference is, to something that then operated to *constrain* or *hold back* the obvious tendency of things, so that the "man of sin" should not at once appear, or so that things should not soon so develope themselves as to give rise to this antichristian power. There were causes at work even then, which *would* ultimately lead to this ; but there was also something which checked the tendency of things, so that the revelation or development of the "man of sin" was put off to a future period. The obvious meaning of this would be, that, when the apostle wrote, there was a tendency to what would occur under the great apostasy, and that this would soon develope itself if it were not restrained. If the reference is to the papacy, this would consist in corruptions already existing in the church, having a resemblance to those which afterwards existed under that system, or which were the *germ* of that system. If there was a tendency towards the concentration of all power in an individual in the church,—if there was an assumption of authority by one class of ministers above another,—if there was a denial of the "parity of the clergy," the tendency would have been to that ultimate assumption of authority which is found in the Romish hierarchy. But conjecture is useless as to what was the precise form in which this tendency then began to develope itself. That the corruptions early began in the church which terminated in the papacy, and which led on directly to it, we know ; and that the apostle was able to fore-

6 And now ye know what ¹ withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time.

1 or, *holdeth.*

see and predict such a final development, shows that he was under the influence of inspiration. It is not known precisely what is referred to by the phrase "what withholdeth," τὸ κατεχόν. The phrase means properly, something that *holds back*, or *restrains*. The word here is in the *neuter* gender, "*What withholdeth.*" In the following verse it is in the *masculine* gender, ὁ κατεχών,—"*he that letteth,*" or withholdeth ; and the reference would seem to be to some agency or state of things under the control of an *individual*, or of *some civil power*, that then operated as a restraint on the natural tendency of things. Of this, the apostle says, *they* had had full information ; but *we* can only conjecture what it was. The restraining power of anything controlled by an individual, or of any government, or the restraining power of God, would meet all that the phrase implies. The most natural interpretation is that which refers it to civil power, meaning that there was something in the form of the existing administration which would prevent this development until that restraint should be removed. The supposition that there was even then a tendency to concentrate all ecclesiastical power at Rome, and that while the civil authority remained there it would not suffer ecclesiastical power to grow to the exorbitant height which it ultimately reached, will meet all that is implied in the language. ¶ *That he might be revealed in his time.* The man of sin. The meaning is, that there was then a restraint operating which would prevent the development of this antichristian power until the proper time ; that is, till the state of the world should be such that in the divine arrangements it would be proper to permit it. It was not to be permitted until the gospel should be extensively preached, and had had an opportunity of showing its fair effects on the nations ; until it

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already ^a work : only he who

^a 1 John 4.3.

had become so planted and established that even the rise of this antichristian power could not effectually uproot it. Had the "man of sin" been permitted to rise at once, the consequence might have been that the new religion would have been crushed, so that it could never have revived again. There was then a providential arrangement by which this growth of wickedness should be checked and restrained, until the new religion should take deep root in the earth, and its perpetuity should be secured. Then the great trial was to be permitted under the "man of sin."

7. *For the mystery of iniquity.* On the meaning of the word *mystery*, see Notes on Rom. xi. 25; comp. 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. i. 9; iii. 3; Col. i. 26. It means properly that which is *hidden* or *concealed*; not necessarily that which is *unintelligible*. The "mystery of iniquity" seems here to refer to some *hidden* or *concealed* depravity,—some form of sin which was working secretly and silently, and which had not yet developed itself. Any secret sources of iniquity in the church,—anything that tended to corrupt its doctrines, and to destroy the simplicity of the faith of the gospel, would correspond with the meaning of the word. Doddridge correctly supposes that this may refer to the pride and ambition of some ministers, the factious temper of some Christians, the imposing of unauthorized severities, the worship of angels, &c. ¶ *Doth already work.* There are elements of these corruptions already existing in the church. Bishop Newton maintains that the foundations of popery were laid in the apostle's days, and that the superstructure was raised by degrees; and this is entirely in accordance with the statements of the apostle Paul. In his own time, he says, there were things which, if not restrained, would expand and ripen into that apostasy. He has not told us particularly to what he refers, but there are several intimations in his

now letteth, *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

writings, as well as in other parts of the New Testament, that even in the apostolic age there existed the elements of those corruptions which were afterwards developed and imbodyed in the papacy. Even "then," says Bishop Newton, "*idolatry* was stealing into the church (1 Cor. x. 14), and a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." [Col. ii. 18; see, however, my Note on that passage.] "There existed strife and divisions (1 Cor. iii. 3), an adulterating and handling the word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. ii. 17; iv. 2), a gain of godliness, teaching of things for filthy lucre's sake (1 Tim. vi. 5; Titus i. 11), a vain observation of festivals (Gal. iv. 10,) a vain distinction of meats (1 Cor. viii. 8), a neglecting of the body (Col. ii. 23), traditions, and commandments, and doctrines of men (Col. ii. 8, 22);" comp. 3 John 9, "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence." These things constituted the elements of the corruptions which were afterwards developed in the papacy, and which are imbodyed in that system. An eye that could see all, would even then have perceived that if there were no restraint, these incipient corruptions would grow up into that system, and would be expanded into all the corruptions and arrogant claims which have ever characterized it; comp. 1 John iv. 3. ¶ *Only he who now letteth.* Who now *hinders*, or *restrains*—*ἡ κατέχων*. This is the same word which is used in ver. 6, and rendered "withholdeth," except that it is there in the neuter gender. There can be no doubt that there is reference to the same restraining power, or the same power under the control of an individual; but what that was, is not quite certain. It was some power which operated as a check on the growing corruptions then existing, and which prevented their full development, but which was to be removed at no distant period, and whose removal would give an opportunity for these corruptions to develop themselves, and for the fu^l

revelation of the man of sin. Such a supposition as that the civil power of Rome was such a restraint, operating to prevent the assumption of the ecclesiastical claims of supremacy which afterwards characterized the papacy, will correspond with all that is necessarily implied in the language. ¶ Will let, *until he be taken out of the way*. This will be an effectual check on these corruptions, preventing their full development, until it is removed, and then the man of sin will appear. The supposition which will best suit this language is, that there was then some civil restraint, preventing the development of existing corruptions, but that there would be a removal, or withdrawing of that restraint; and that then the tendency of the existing corruptions would be seen. It is evident, as Oldshausen remarks, that this resisting or restraining power must be something *out of the church*, and distinguished from the antichristian tendency itself; *von der Kirche und vom Antichristenthum*. It is necessary, therefore, to understand this of the restraints of civil power. Was there, then, any fact in history which will accord with this interpretation? The belief among the primitive Christians was, that what hindered the rise of the man of sin was the Roman empire, and therefore "they prayed for its peace and welfare, as knowing that when the Roman empire should be dissolved and broken in pieces, the empire of the man of sin would be raised on its ruins." *Bp. Newton*. How this revolution was effected, may be seen by the statement of Machiavel. "The emperor of Rome, quitting Rome to dwell at Constantinople" (in the fourth century, under Constantine), "the Roman empire began to decline, but the church of Rome augmented as fast. Nevertheless, until the coming in of the Lombards, all Italy being under the dominion of either emperors or kings, the bishops assumed no more power than what was due to their doctrine and manners; in civil affairs they were subject to the civil power. But Theodoric, king of the Goths, fixing his seat at Ravenna, was that which advanced their inte-

rest, and made them more considerable in Italy, for there being no other prince left in Rome, the Romans were forced for protection to pay greater allegiance to the pope. The Lombards having invaded and reduced Italy into several cantons, the pope took the opportunity, and began to hold up his head. For being, as it were, governor and principal of Rome, the emperor of Constantinople and the Lombards bare him a respect, so that the Romans (by mediation of their pope,) began to treat and confederate with Longinus [the emperor's lieutenant], and the Lombards, not as subjects, but as equals and companions; which said custom continuing, and the pope's entering into alliance sometimes with the Lombards, and sometimes with the Greeks, contracted great reputation to their dignity." (*Hist. of Florence*, B. i. p. 6, of the English translation.) A more extended quotation on the same subject, may be seen in Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 407, 408. To any one acquainted with the decline and fall of the Roman empire, nothing can be more manifest than the correspondence of the facts in history respecting the rise of the papacy, and the statement of the apostle Paul here. The simple facts are these. (1.) There were early corruptions in the church at Rome, as there were elsewhere, but peculiarly there, as Rome was the seat of philosophy and of power. (2.) There were great efforts made by the bishop of Rome to increase his authority, and there was a steady approximation to what he subsequently claimed—that of being universal bishop. (3.) There was a constant tendency to yield to him deference and respect in all matters. (4.) This was kept in check as long as Rome was the seat of the imperial power. Had that power remained there, it would have been impossible for the Roman bishop ever to have obtained the civil and ecclesiastical eminence which he ultimately did. Rome could not have had *two* heads, both claiming and exercising supreme power; and there never could have been a "revelation of the man of sin." (5.) Constantine

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall ^a consume with the spirit ^b of his
 a Da.7.10,11.

mouth, and shall destroy ^c with the brightness of his coming :

b Is.11.4; Re.19.15,21. c He.10.27.

removed the seat of empire to Constantinople; and this removal or "taking away" of the only restraint on the ambitious projects of the Roman bishops, gave all the opportunity which could be desired for the growth of the papal power. In all history there cannot, probably, be found a series of events corresponding more accurately with a prophetic statement than this; and there is every evidence, therefore, that these are the events to which the Spirit of inspiration referred.

8. *And then shall that Wicked be revealed.* ὁ ἄνομος—"the wicked one," referring to the "man of sin," and called "the wicked one" because of the eminent depravity of the system of which he was to be the head; see Notes on ver. 3. ¶ *Whom the Lord shall consume.* The Lord Jesus; see Notes on Acts i. 24. The word *consume* here—ἀναλῶσθαι—means to *destroy*; see Gal. v. 15; Luke ix. 54. The word would be applicable to any kind of destruction. The *methods* by which this will be done are immediately specified—and it is of much importance to understand them, if this refers to the papacy. ¶ *With the spirit of his mouth.* What goes out of his mouth, or what he speaks; that is, *word, truth, command, or gospel*—all of which he may be regarded as *speaking*. In Rev. i. 16; xix. 15, 21, it is said of the Redeemer that "a sharp two-edged sword goeth out of his mouth;" that is, his word, doctrine, or command—*what he speaks*—is *like a sharp sword*. It will cut deep; will lay open the heart; will destroy his enemies. Comp. Isa. xi. 4, "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." The reference in the passage before us is to *one* of the methods which would be employed to "destroy" the man of sin; and the sense is, that it would be by what is *spoken* by the Redeemer. This may refer either to what he will say *at his coming*, or to his *truth*—already spoken; to what has gone from his

lips, by whomsoever uttered; and the meaning then is, that one of the grand agencies for destroying this antichristian power is the *truth* spoken or revealed by the Saviour—that is, his pure gospel. If this latter be the true interpretation, it may mean that the process for his destruction may have commenced long anterior to the personal appearing of the Redeemer, but that the *complete* destruction of this power will be accomplished by the splendour of his Second Advent. It cannot be denied, however, that the most obvious interpretation is that which refers both clauses in the sentence to the same period—that of his second coming. Still, it is not improper to suppose that it may be implied that his power will be weakened and diminished by the influence of the gospel, though it may not be *wholly* destroyed until the second coming of the Saviour. ¶ *And shall destroy.* καταργήσιν. Shall bring to naught; cause to cease; put an end to. This is, in some respects, a stronger word than that which in the former part of the verse is rendered *consume*. It denotes a more entire *destruction* than that, though it does not refer so much to any positive *agency* by which it will be done. In the former word, the attention is directed more to the *agency* by which the destruction will be effected—to the exertion of some kind of *power* to do it; in this word the attention is directed rather to the *entireness* or *totality* of the destruction. The antichristian domination will *wholly* cease, or be *entirely* destroyed. The words would naturally harmonize with the idea that there would be a somewhat gradual process under the operation of *truth* toward the destruction of the man of sin, but that the *complete* annihilation of his power would be by some more manifest exhibition of the personal glory of the Saviour. ¶ *With the brightness of his coming.* This is evidently a Hebraism, meaning his splen-

9 *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with*

did or glorious appearing. The Greek word, however, rendered "*brightness*" (*ἐπιφάνεια*—*epiphany*)—means merely *an appearing, or appearance*. So it is used in 1 Tim. vi. 4; 2 Tim. i. 10; iv. i. 8; Titus ii. 13, in all which places it is rendered *appearing*, and refers to the manifestation of the Saviour when he shall come to judge the world. It is used nowhere else in the New Testament. There is no necessary idea of *splendour* in the word, and the idea is not, as our translation would seem to convey, that there would be *such a dazzling light, or such unsufferable brightness* that all would be consumed before it, but that he would *appear*, and that this antichristian power would be destroyed by his appearing; that is, by *himself* when he would return. The agency in doing it would not be his *brightness*, but *himself*. It would seem to follow from this, that, however this enormous power of wickedness might be weakened by truth, the final triumph over it would be reserved for the Son of God himself on his second return to our world. Yet, if this be so, it need not lessen our zeal in endeavouring to diminish the power of these corruptions; to establish and spread the truth, or to convert the defenders of these errors to a better faith.

9. *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan.* Greek, κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ. According to the energy of Satan; that is, the energetic or efficient operation of Satan. The word rendered *after*, it need not be said to one who looks at the Greek, does not refer to *time*, but is a preposition, meaning *according to; in conformity with*; meaning that the manner of his appearing would be accompanied by such works as would show that the agency of Satan was employed, and such as he only could produce. It does not mean that *the coming of the Lord Jesus* would be *after* Satan had worked in this manner, but that the manifestation of that wicked one would be with such demonstrations of power and wonder as

all power and signs and lying wonders,

Satan only could effect. The system over which he presides is originated by Satan, and sustained by those things which he alone can perform. On the word *Satan*, see Notes on Job i. 6. The idea is, that it would be under the direction and control of the great enemy of God, and that the things on which it would rely for support could be traced to his agency. In all the pretended miracles to which it would appeal, there would be nothing which Satan could not accomplish.

¶ *With all power.* With all the power which Satan can exhibit; meaning also, that there would be a great exertion of power in the case. It would not be a feeble and imbecile dominion. The dominion of the papacy has been one of the *most powerful* on earth. There has been none which has been more dreaded by the nations of the earth—and there have been times when nations trembled, and kings turned pale on their thrones at the frown of the pope. ¶ *And signs.* This word frequently denotes real miracles, but not necessarily so. It may be applied to pretended miracles as well as real, and is undoubtedly so used here, as it is connected with "*lying wonders*," and as it is said that the thing wrought would be "*after the working of Satan*."

There is doubtless reference to such "*signs and wonders*" as the Saviour mentions in Matt. xxiv. 24; see Notes on that passage. It is hardly necessary to remark that the papacy has always relied for support on its pretended miracles. Even in our own age the wonders performed by the Prince Hohenloe, and by the pretended seamless garment of the Saviour, have been proclaimed as true miracles, and as furnishing indubitable evidence of the truth of the Roman Catholic system. The dissolving of the blood of St. Januarius, the removal of Pilate's stairs to Rome, and the transportation to Italy of the "*house of our Lady*," are among the miracles to which there is a constant reference in the papal communion. In addition

10 And with all deceivableness
 " of unrighteousness in them that
 perish ; because they received not
 a He.3.13.

to these and to all similar pretensions, there is the power claimed of performing a miracle at the pleasure of the priest by the change of bread and wine into the " body and blood, the soul and divinity " of the Lord Jesus. In 1756, there was published in London a book entitled, " The miraculous power of the church of Christ, asserted through each successive century, from the apostle down to the present time." The power of working miracles has been one of the standing claims of the Papacy. ¶ *And lying wonders.* False or pretended miracles. They would be such as would be claimed to be miracles ; such as would excite wonder ; and yet such as were false and delusive. No Protestant assuredly needs to be convinced that this is just the character of the pretended miracles of the Papacy. It would be impossible for language to describe them more clearly, in the apprehension of all Protestants, than is done in this language of the apostle Paul.

10. *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.* There are two ideas here. The first is, that there would be *deceit* ; and the other is, that it would be for the purpose of promoting unrighteousness or iniquity. The iniquitous system would be maintained by fraudulent methods. No one who has read Pascal's Provincial Letters can ever doubt that this description is applicable to the system of the Jesuits ; and no one familiar with the acts of the Papacy, as they have always been practised, can doubt that the whole system is accurately described by this language. The plausible reasoning by which the advocates of that system have palliated and apologized for sins of various kinds, has been among its most remarkable features. ¶ *In them that perish.* Among those who will perish ; that is, among the abandoned and wicked. The reference is to men of corrupt minds and lives, over whom this system would have power ; countenancing

the love ^b of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall
 b 1 Co.16.22.

them in their depravity, and fitting them still farther for destruction. The idea is, that these acts would have especial reference to men who would be lost at any rate, and who would be sustained in their wickedness by this false and delusive system. ¶ *Because they received not the love of the truth.* They prefer this system of error and delusion to the simple and pure gospel, by which they might have been saved.

11. *And for this cause.* Because they choose error, or their hearts love that more than they do truth. The original reason then of their embracing and adhering to the system was not an arbitrary decree on the part of God, but that they did not love the truth. Hence, he gave them up to this system of error. If a man strongly *prefers* error to truth, and sin to holiness, it is not wrong to allow him freely to evince his own preference. ¶ *God shall send them strong delusion.* Gr., " energy of deceit ; " a Hebraism, meaning strong deceit. The agency of God is here distinctly recognised, in accordance with the uniform statements of the Scriptures, respecting evil ; comp. Ex. vii. 13 ; ix. 12 ; x. 1, 20, 27 ; xi. 10 ; xiv. 8. Deut. x. 30 ; Isa. xlv. 7. On the nature of this agency, see Notes on John xii. 40. It is not necessary here to suppose that there was any positive influence on the part of God in *causing* this delusion to come upon them, but all the force of the language will be met, as well as the reasoning of the apostle, by supposing that God withdrew all restraint, and suffered men simply to show that they did not love the truth. God often places men in circumstances to develop their own nature, and it cannot be shown to be wrong that he should do so. If men have no love of the truth, and no desire to be saved, it is not improper that they should be allowed to manifest this. How it happened that they had no " love of the truth," is a different question, to which the remarks

send them strong delusion, ^a that they should believe a lie :

12 That ^b they all might be
^a Eze. 14.9; Ro. 1.24. ^b De. 32.35.

of the apostle do not appertain ; comp. Notes on Rom. ix. 17, 18 ; i. 24. ¶ *That they should believe a lie.* This does not affirm that God *wished* them to believe a lie ; nor that he would not have preferred that they should believe the truth ; nor that he exerted any direct agency to cause them to believe a lie. It means merely that he left them, because they did not love the truth, to believe what was false, and what would end in their destruction. Can any one doubt that this constantly occurs in the world ? Men are left to believe impostors ; to trust to false guides ; to rely on unfounded information ; to credit those who live to delude and betray the innocent ; and to follow those who lead them to ruin. God does not interpose by direct power to preserve them. Can any one doubt this ? Yet this is not peculiarly the doctrine of revelation. The fact pertains just as much to the infidel as it does to the believer in Christianity, and he is just as much bound to explain it as the Christian is. It belongs to our world—to us all—and it should not be charged on Christianity as a doctrine pertaining peculiarly to that system.

12. *That they all might be damned.* The word *damned* we commonly apply now exclusively to future punishment, and it has a *harsher* signification than the original word ; comp. Notes, 1 Cor. xi. 29. The Greek word—*κρίνω*—means to judge, determine, decide ; and then to condemn ; Rom. ii. 27 ; xv. 22 ; James iv. 11 ; John vii. 51 ; Luke xix. 22 ; Acts xiii. 27. It may be applied to the judgment of the last day (John v. 22 ; viii. 50 ; Acts xvii. 31 ; Rom. iii. 6 ; 2 Tim. iv. 1,) but not necessarily. The word *judged* or *condemned*, would, in this place, express all that the Greek word necessarily conveys. Yet there can be no doubt that the *judgment* or *condemnation* which is referred to, is that which will occur when the Saviour will appear. It does not seem to me to be

damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

a necessary interpretation of this to suppose that it teaches that God would send a strong delusion that they should believe a lie, *in order* that all might be damned who did not believe the truth ; or that he *desired* that they should be damned, and sent this as the means of securing it ; but the sense is, that this course of events would be allowed to occur, *so that* (*ἵνα*—not *ἵα* ; *τις* ; *τις*) all who do not love the truth would be condemned. The particle here used, and rendered “*that*” (*ἵνα*), in connection with the phrase “all might be damned” is employed in two general senses, either as marking the end, purpose, or cause *for*, or *on account of*, which anything is done ; *to the end that*, or *in order that it may be so and so* ; or as marking simply the result, event, or upshot of an action, *so that*, *so as that*. *Robinson, Lex.* In the latter case it denotes merely that something will really take place, without indicating that such was the design of the agent, or that what brought it about was in order that it *might* take place. It is also used, in the later Greek, so as neither to mark the purpose, nor to indicate that the event would occur, but merely to point out that to which the preceding words refer. It is not proper, therefore, to infer that this passage teaches that all these things would be brought about in the arrangements of Providence, *in order* that they might be damned who came under their influence. The passage teaches that such would be the result ; that the connection between these delusions and the condemnation of those who were deluded, would be certain. It cannot be proved from the Scriptures that God sends on men strong delusions, *in order* that they may be damned. No such construction should be put on a passage of Scripture if it can be avoided, and it cannot be shown that it is necessary here. ¶ *Who believed not the truth.*

13 But we ^a are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen ^b you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;

^a chap. 1.3. ^b Ep. 1.4; 1 Th. 1.4; 1 Pe. 1.2.

The grounds or reasons why they would be damned are now stated. One would be that they did not believe the truth—not that God sent upon them delusion *in order* that they might be damned. That men will be condemned for not believing the truth, and that it will be right thus to condemn them, is everywhere the doctrine of the Scriptures, and is equally the doctrine of common sense; see Notes on Mark xvi. 16. ¶ *But had pleasure in unrighteousness.* This is the second ground or reason of their condemnation. If men have *pleasure* in sin, it is proper that they should be punished. There *can* be no more just ground of condemnation than that a man *loves to do wrong*.

13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you; see Notes on chap. i. 3. ¶ *Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.* The following important things are affirmed or implied here: (1.) That God had *chosen* or *elected* them (ἐἰλετο) to salvation. The doctrine of *election*, therefore, is true. (2.) That this was from *the beginning* (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς); that is, from eternity; see Notes on John i. 1; Eph. i. 4; iii. 9–11. The doctrine of *eternal election* is, therefore, true. (3.) That this was the choice of the persons to whom Paul referred. The doctrine of *personal election* is, therefore, true. (4.) That this is a reason for thanksgiving. Why should it not be? Can there be any higher ground of praise or gratitude than that God has chosen us to be eternally holy and happy, and that he has from eternity designed that we should be so? Whatever, therefore, may be the feelings with which those who are *not* chosen to salvation, regard this doctrine, it is clear that those who

14 Whereunto ^c he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory ^d of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.

^c 1 Pe. 5.10.

^d John 17.22.

have evidence that they *are* chosen should make it a subject of grateful praise. They can have no more exalted source of gratitude than that they are chosen to eternal life. ¶ *Through sanctification of the Spirit.* Being made holy by the divine Spirit. It is not without respect to character, but it is a choice to holiness and then to salvation. No one can have evidence that he is chosen to salvation except as he has evidence that he is sanctified by the Spirit; see Notes on Eph. i. 4. ¶ *And belief of the truth.* In connection with believing the truth. No one who is not a believer in the truth can have evidence that God has chosen him.

14. Whereunto he called you by our gospel. He made the gospel as preached by us the means of calling you to salvation. That is, God has chosen you to salvation from eternity, and has made the gospel as preached by us the means of carrying that eternal purpose into effect. ¶ *To the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* That you may partake of the same glory as the Saviour in heaven; see Notes on John xvii. 22, 24.

15. Therefore. In view of the fact that you are thus chosen from eternity, and that you are to be raised up to such honour and glory. ¶ *Stand fast.* Amidst all the temptations which surround you; comp. Notes on Eph. vi. 10–14. ¶ *And hold the traditions which ye have been taught.* On the word *traditions*, see Notes on Matt. xv. 2. It means properly things delivered over from one to another; then anything orally delivered—any precept, doctrine, or law. It is frequently employed to denote that which is not written, as contradistinguished from that which is

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which ^a hath loved us, and

^a John 13.1; Ro.1.5.

written (comp. Matt. xv. 2), but not necessarily or always; for here the apostle speaks of the "traditions which they had been taught by his epistle;" comp. Notes, 1 Cor. xi. 2. Here it means the doctrines or precepts which they had received from the apostle, whether when he was with them, or after he left them; whether communicated by preaching or by letter. This passage can furnish no authority for holding the "traditions" which have come down from ancient times, and which profess to have been derived from the apostles; for (1.) there is no evidence that any of those traditions were given by the apostles; (2.) many of them are manifestly so trifling, false, and contrary to the writings of the apostles, that they could not have been delivered by them; (3.) if any of them are genuine, it is impossible to separate them from those which are false; (4.) we have all that is necessary for salvation in the written word; and (5.) there is not the least evidence that the apostle here meant to refer to any such thing. He speaks only of what had been delivered to them by himself, whether orally or by letter; not of what was delivered from one to another as from him. There is no intimation here that they were to hold anything as from him which they had not received directly from him, either by his own instructions personally or by letter. With what propriety, then, can this passage be adduced to prove that we are to hold the traditions which professedly come to us through a great number of intermediate persons?—Where is the evidence here that the church was to hold those unwritten traditions, and transmit them to future times? ¶ *Whether by word.* By preaching, when we were with you. It does not mean that he had sent any oral message to them by a third person. ¶ *Or our epistle.* The

hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope ^b through grace,

^b 1 Pe.1.3.

former letter which he had written to them.

16. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself.* This expression is equivalent to this: "I pray our Lord Jesus, and our Father, to comfort you." It is really a prayer offered to the Saviour—a recognition of Christ as the source of consolation as well as the Father, and a union of his name with that of the Father in invoking important blessings. It is such language as could be used only by one who regarded the Lord Jesus as divine. ¶ *And God even our Father.* Gr. "And God, and (*καὶ*) our Father;" though not incorrectly rendered "*even our Father.*" If it should be contended that the use of the word "*and*"—"our Lord Jesus Christ, *and* God," proves that the Lord Jesus is a different being from God—the use of the same word "*and*" would prove that the "*Father*" is a different being from God. But the truth is, the apostle meant to speak of the Father *and* the Son as the *common* source of the blessing for which he prayed. ¶ *Which hath loved us.* Referring particularly to the Father. The love which is referred to is that manifested in redemption, or which is shown us through Christ; see John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9. ¶ *And hath given us everlasting consolation.* Not temporary comfort, but that which will endure for ever. The joys of religion are not like other joys. They soon fade away;—they always terminate at death;—they cease when trouble comes, when sickness invades the frame, when wealth or friends depart, when disappointment lowers, when the senses by age refuse to minister as they once did to our pleasures. The comforts of religion depend on no such contingencies. They live through all these changes—attend us in sickness, poverty, bereavement, losses, and age; they are with us in death, and they are perpetual and un-

17 Comfort your hearts, ^a and
a 1 Col. 8.

changing beyond the grave. ¶ *And good hope through grace*; see Notes on Rom. v. 2, 5; Heb. vi. 19.

17. *Comfort your hearts*; Notes, 1 Thess. iii. 2; v. 11, 14. The Thessalonians were in the midst of trials, and Paul prayed that they might have the full consolations of their religion. ¶ *And stablish you*. Make you firm and steadfast; 1 Thess. iii. 2, 13. ¶ *In every good word and work*. In every true doctrine, and in the practice of every virtue.

This chapter is very important in reference to the rise of that great antichristian power which has exerted, and which still exerts so baleful an influence over the Christian world. Assuming now that it refers to the Papacy, in accordance with the exposition which has been given, there are a few important reflections to which it gives rise.

(1.) The Second Advent of the Redeemer is an event which is distinctly predicted in the Scriptures. This is assumed in this chapter; and though Paul corrects some errors into which the Thessalonians had fallen, he does not suggest this as one of them. Their error was in regard to the time of his appearing; not the fact.

(2.) The time when he will appear is not made known to men. The apostles did not pretend to designate it, nor did the Saviour himself; Matt. xxiv. 36; Mark xiii. 32; Acts i. 7.

(3.) The course of reasoning in this chapter would lead to the expectation that a considerable time would elapse before the Saviour would appear. The apostles, therefore, did not believe that the end of the world was near, and they did not teach false doctrine on the subject, as infidels have often alleged. No one, who attentively and candidly studies this chapter, it seems to me, can suppose that Paul believed that the Second Advent of the Saviour would occur within a short time, or during the generation when he lived. He has described a long series of events which were to intervene before the Saviour

stablish you in every good word and work.

would appear—events which, if the interpretation which has been given is correct, have been in fact in a process of development from that time to the present, and which, it must have been foreseen, even then, would require a long period before they would be completed. There was to be a great apostasy. There were at that time subtle causes at work which would lead to it. They were, however, then held in check and restrained by some foreign influence. But the time would come, when that foreign power would be withdrawn. Then these now hidden and restrained corruptions would develop themselves into this great antichristian power. That power would sustain itself by a series of pretended miracles and lying wonders—and, after all this, would be the second coming of the Son of man. But this would require time. Such a series of events would not be completed in a day, or in a single generation. They would require a succession—perhaps a long succession—of years, before these developments would be complete. It is clear, therefore, that the apostle did not hold that the Lord Jesus would return in that age, and that he did not mean to be understood as teaching it; and consequently it should not be said that he or his fellow-apostles were mistaken in the statements which they have recorded respecting the second coming of the Lord Jesus and the end of the world.

(4.) The apostle Paul was inspired. He has recorded in this chapter a distinct prediction of an important series of events which were to occur at a future, and most of them at quite a remote period. They were such that they could have been foreseen by no natural sagacity, and no human skill. There were, indeed, corruptions existing then in the church, but no mere natural sagacity could have foreseen that they would grow up into that enormous system which would overshadow the Christian world, and live for so many ages.

(5.) If these predictions referred to the Papacy, we may see how we are to regard that system of religion. The simple inquiry, if this interpretation is correct, is, *how did the apostle Paul regard that system to which he referred?* Did he consider it to be the true church? Did he regard it as a church at all? The language which he uses will enable us easily to answer these questions. He speaks of it as "the apostasy;" he speaks of the head of that system as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the wicked one," and as "opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God;" he says that his "coming is after the working of Satan, with lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." Can it be believed then that he regarded this as a true church of Jesus Christ? Are these the characteristics of the church as laid down elsewhere in the Scriptures? Wherever it may lead, it seems clear to me that the apostle did not regard that system of which he spoke as having any of the marks of a true church, and the only question which can be raised on this point is, whether the fair interpretation of the passage demands that it shall be considered as referring to the Papacy. Protestants believe that it must be so understood, and Papists have not yet disproved the reasons which they allege for their belief.

(6.) If this be the fair interpretation, then we may see what is the value of the pretended "succession" of the ministry through that system. If such a regular "succession" of ministers from the apostles could be made out, what would it be worth? What is the value of a spiritual descent from Pope Alexander VI.? How would it increase the proper respect for the ministerial office, if it could be proved to be derived in a right line from those monsters of incest, ambition, covetousness, and blood, who have occupied the Papal throne? A Protestant minister should blush and hang his head if it were charged on him that he held his office by no better title than such a derivation. Much less

should he make it a matter of glorying and an argument to prove that he only is an authorized minister, that he has received his office through such men.

(7.) From this chapter we may see the tendency of human nature to degeneracy. The elements of that great and corrupt apostasy existed even in apostolic times. Those elements grew regularly up into the system of the Papacy, and spread blighting and death over the whole Christian world. It is the tendency of human nature to corrupt the best things. The Christian church was put in possession of a pure, and lovely, and glorious system of religion. It was a religion adapted to elevate and save the race. There was not an interest of humanity which it would not have fostered and promoted; there was not a source of human sorrow which it would not have mitigated or relieved; there were none of the race whom it would not have elevated and purified. Its influence, as far as it was seen, was uniformly of the happiest kind. It did no injury anywhere, but produced only good. But how soon was it voluntarily exchanged for the worst form of superstition and error that has ever brooded in darkness over mankind! How soon did the light fade, and how rapidly did it become more obscure, until it well nigh-went out altogether! And with what tenacity did the world adhere to the system that grew up under the great apostasy, maintaining it by learning, and power, and laws, and dungeons, and racks, and faggots! What a comment is this on human nature, thus "loving darkness more than light," and error rather than truth!

(8.) The chapter teaches the importance of resisting error at the beginning. These errors had their foundation in the time of the apostles. They were then comparatively small, and perhaps to many they appeared unimportant; and yet the whole Papal system was just the development of errors, the germs of which existed in their days. Had these been crushed, as Paul wished to crush them, the church might have been saved from

CHAPTER III.

FINALLY, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord

may ¹ have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you ;

1 run.

the corruption, and woes, and persecutions produced by the Papacy. So error now should always be opposed—no matter how small or unimportant it may appear. We have no right to connive at it ; to patronise it ; to smile upon it. The *beginnings* of evil are always to be resisted with firmness ; and if that is done, the triumph of truth will be certain,

(9.) The church is safe. It has now passed through every conceivable form of trial, and still survives, and is now more vigorous and flourishing than it ever was before. It has passed through fiery times of persecution ; survived the attempts of emperors and kings to destroy it, and lived while the system of error described here by the apostle Paul has thrown its baleful shade over almost the whole Christian world. It cannot reasonably be supposed that it will be called to pass through such trials again as it has already endured ; but whether it does or not, the past history of the church is a guarantee that it will survive all that it is destined to encounter. None but a religion of divine origin could have continued to live amidst so many corruptions, and so many attempts to destroy it ; and in the view of the past history of that church it is impossible not to come to the conclusion that it has been founded by God himself.

CHAPTER III.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER.

This chapter is made up of exhortations and directions in regard to the performance of various Christian duties.

(1.) The apostle asks their prayers ; ver. 1, 2. He desires them to pray particularly that the true religion might be prospered, and that, in preaching the gospel, he might be delivered from the opposition of unreasonable and wicked men.

(2.) He expresses confidence that God would incline them to do what was right, and prays that he would

keep their hearts in his love, and in patient waiting for the Saviour ; ver 3—5.

(3.) He commands them to remove from their number those who were disorderly, and especially those who were idle, and addresses an earnest exhortation to this class, that they would be diligently engaged in the prosecution of the business of their appropriate callings ; ver. 6—12.

(4.) He exhorts them not to be weary in doing well ; ver. 13.

(5.) He directs that if any one should not obey the commands given in this epistle, he should be noted, and they were to separate themselves from him. Yet they were not to regard him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother ; ver. 14, 15.

(6.) The epistle closes with the usual salutations ; ver. 16—18.

1. *Finally, brethren, pray for us.* That is, for Paul, Silas, and Timothy, then engaged in arduous labours at Corinth. This request for the prayers of Christians is one which Paul often makes ; see Notes, 1 Thess. v. 25. ¶ *That the word of the Lord may have free course.* That is, the gospel. The margin is “run.” So also the Greek. The idea is, that it might meet with no obstruction, but that it might be carried abroad with the rapidity of a racer out of whose way every hindrance was removed. The gospel would spread rapidly in the earth if all the obstructions which men have put in its way were removed ; and that they may be removed should be one of the constant subjects of prayer. ¶ *And be glorified.* Be honoured ; or appear to be glorious. ¶ *As it is with you.* It is evident from this that Paul met with some obstructions in preaching the gospel where he was then labouring. What they were, he mentions in the next verse. He was then at Corinth (see the Introduction), and the history in the Acts of the Apostles informs us of the difficulties which he had to encounter there ; see Acts xviii.

2 And that we may be delivered from ¹ unreasonable and

wicked men : for all *men* have not faith.

¹ *absurd.*

2. *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.* That is, from opposition in their endeavours to spread the gospel. Paul encountered such men everywhere, as all do who labour to diffuse the knowledge of the truth, but it is probable that there is particular reference here to the opposition which he encountered when in Corinth. This opposition arose mainly from the Jews ; see Acts xviii. 5, 6, 12, 13. The word *unreasonable* is rendered in the margin *absurd*. The Greek word (*ἀνόητος*) means, properly, *out of place*; then absurd, unusual, strange; then improper, unreasonable, wicked. It is rendered in Luke xxiii. 41, *amiss*; in Acts xxviii. 6, *harm*. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It refers here to men who acted amiss or improperly; men who were not found in the right place, or who had not the right views of things; and probably does not refer so much to their being positively wicked or malicious, as to *their putting things out of their proper place*. They gave an undue prominence to certain things, and less importance to others than they deserved. They had a distorted vision of the value of objects, and in tenacious adherence to their own views, and prosecuting their own objects to the exclusion of all others, they presented a constant obstruction to the true gospel. This word would apply, and probably was designed to be applied, to Jewish teachers (see Acts xviii. 5, 6), who gave an undue prominence to the laws of Moses; but it will apply well to all who entertain distorted views of the relative importance of objects, and who put things out of their place. Men often have a *hobby*. They give more importance to some object than it deserves. They, therefore, undervalue other objects; press their own with improper zeal; denounce others who do not feel the same interest in them which they do; withdraw from those who will not go with them in their

views; form separate parties, and thus throw themselves in the way of all who are endeavouring to do good in some other method. It was from men who thus put themselves *out of place*, that the apostle prayed to be delivered. ¶ *And wicked men.* Men with bad aims and purposes. It is not always true that those who would come under the appellation of what the apostle here calls "*unreasonable*," are *wicked*. They are sometimes well-meaning, but misguided men. But in this case, it seems, they were men of bad character, who were at heart opposed to what was good, as well as inclined to put things out of their place. ¶ *For all men have not faith.* Of the truth of this, no one can doubt. The only question is, as to its bearing on the case before us. Some suppose it means, "there are few men whom we can safely trust;" others, that it means that they have not that "upright and candid disposition which would engage men to receive the testimony of the apostles" (*Doddridge*); others, that "all men do not embrace the Christian faith, but many oppose it" (*Benson*); and others, that "all men do not believe, but the worthy only." *Bloomfield*. The connection seems to require us to understand it as meaning that all men are not prepared to embrace the gospel. Hence they set themselves against it, and from such men Paul prayed that he might be delivered; comp. 2 Tim. iii. 8. The state of mind in which the apostle was when he wrote this, seems to have been this: He recollected the readiness with which the Thessalonians had embraced the gospel, and the firmness with which they held it, and seems to suppose that *they* would imagine the same thing must be found true everywhere. But he says all men have not the same faith; all were not prepared cordially and fully to embrace the gospel. There were unreasonable and wicked men whom he had encountered, from whom he prayed that he might be delivered.

3 But the Lord ^a is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep ^b you from evil.

4 And we have confidence ^c in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

a 1 Co. 1.9. b John 17.15. c 2 Co. 7.16.

3. *But the Lord is faithful.*—Though men cannot be trusted, God is faithful to his promises and his purposes. He may always be confided in; and when men are unbelieving, perverse, unkind, and disposed to do us wrong, we may go to him, and we shall always find in him one in whom we may confide. This is an exceedingly interesting declaration, and is a beautiful illustration of the resource which a truly pious mind will feel that it has. We often have occasion to know, to our sorrow, that "all men have not faith." We witness their infidelity. We see how they turn away from the truth. We see many who once gave some evidence that they had "faith," abandon it all; and we see many in the church who seem to have no true faith, and who refuse to lend their aid in promoting the cause of religion. In such circumstances, the heart is disposed to despond, and to ask whether religion can be advanced in the midst of so much indifference and opposition? At such times, how consoling is it to be able to turn, as Paul did, to one who is faithful; who never fails us; and who will certainly accomplish his benevolent purposes. Men may be faithless and false, but God never is. They may refuse to embrace the gospel, and set themselves against it, but God will not abandon his great purposes. Many who are in the church may forget their solemn and sacred vows, and may show no fidelity to the cause of their Saviour, but God himself will never abandon that cause. *To a pious mind it affords unspeakably more consolation to reflect that a faithful God is the friend of the cause which we love, than it would were all men, in and out of the church, its friends.* ¶ *Who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil;* see Notes on John xvii. 5; comp.

5 And the Lord direct ^d your hearts into the love of God, and into the ¹ patient waiting for Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw ^e yourselves from every brother ^d 1 Ch. 29.18. 1 or, *patience of Christ.* e 1 Ti. 6.5.

Notes on Eph. vi. 16. The allusion is to *the Evil One*, or Satan, and the meaning is, that God would keep them from his wiles.

4. *And we have confidence in the Lord.* Not primarily in you, for you have hearts like others, but in the Lord. It is remarkable that when Paul expresses the utmost confidence in Christians that they will live and act as becomes their profession, his reliance is not on anything in themselves, but wholly on the faithfulness of God. He must be a stranger to the human heart who puts much confidence in it even in its best state; see Phil. i. 6; iv. 7; 2 Tim. i. 12; comp. Jude 24; Rev. iii. 10; Prov. xxviii. 26.

5. *And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.* So direct your hearts that you may love God. ¶ *And into the patient waiting for Christ.* Marg., *patience of Christ.* The marginal reading is in accordance with the Greek, and seems best to express the apostle's meaning. The prayer of the apostle was, that they might have the love of God in their hearts, and "the patience of Christ;" that is, the same patience which Christ evinced in his trials. They were then suffering affliction and persecution. They needed patience, that they might endure their trials in a proper manner. It was natural for the apostle to refer them to the Saviour, the great example of patience, and to pray that they might have the same which he had. That it does not mean that they were to wait patiently for the *appearing* of Christ, as our translation seems to imply, is quite clear, because the apostle had just been showing them that he would not appear until after a long series of events had occurred.

6. *Now we command you, brethren.* The apostle now (vers. 6—12) turns to an important subject—the proper

“that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us

a 1 Co. 5. 11, 13.

method of treating those who were idle and disorderly in the church. In the previous epistle he had adverted to this subject, but in the mild language of exhortation. When he wrote that epistle he was aware that there were some among them who were disposed to be idle, and he had tenderly exhorted them “to be quiet, and to mind their own business, and to work with their own hands;” 1 Thess. iv. 11. But it seems the exhortation, and the example of Paul himself when there (1 Thess. ii. 9), had not been effectual in inducing them to be industrious. It became, therefore, necessary to use the strong language of *command*, as he does here, and to require that if they would not work, the church should withdraw from them. What was the original *cause* of their idleness, is not known. There seems no reason, however, to doubt that it was much increased by their expectation that the Saviour would soon appear, and that the world would soon come to an end. If this was to be so, of what use would it be to labour? Why strive to accumulate property with reference to the wants of a family, or to a day of sickness, or old age? Why should a man build a house that was soon to be burnt up, or why buy a farm which he was soon to leave? The effect of the expectation of the speedy appearing of the Lord Jesus has always been to induce men to neglect their worldly affairs, and to lead idle lives. Man, naturally disposed to be idle, wants the stimulus of hope that he is labouring for the future welfare of himself, for his family, or for society, nor will he labour if he believes that the Saviour is about to appear. ¶ *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*; see Notes on 1 Cor. v. 4. ¶ *That ye withdraw yourselves*; Notes on 1 Tim. vi. 5. This is the true notion of Christian discipline. It is not primarily that of cutting a man off, or denouncing him, or excommunicating him; it is that of with-

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

drawing from him. We cease to have fellowship with him. We do not regard him any longer as a Christian brother. We separate from him. We do not seek to affect him in any other respect; we do not injure his name or standing as a man, or hold him up to reprobation; we do not follow him with denunciation or a spirit of revenge; we simply cease to recognise him as a Christian brother, when he shows that he is no longer worthy to be regarded as such. We do not deliver him over to the civil arm; we do not inflict any positive punishment on him; we leave him unmolested in all his rights as a citizen, a man, a neighbour, a husband, a father, and simply say that he is no longer one of us as a Christian. How different is this from *excommunication*, as it has been commonly understood! How different from the anathemas fulminated by the Papacy, and the delivering of the heretic over to the civil power! ¶ *From every brother that walketh disorderly*; comp. Notes, 1 Cor. v. 11—13. A “disorderly walk” denotes conduct that is in any way contrary to the rules of Christ. The proper idea of the word used here (*ἀτάκτως*), is that of soldiers who do not keep the ranks; who are regardless of order; and then who are irregular in any way. The word would include any violation of the rules of Christ on any subject. ¶ *And not after the tradition which ye received of us*. According to the doctrine which we delivered to you; see Notes on chap. ii. 15. This shows that by the word “tradition” the apostle did not mean *unwritten* doctrines handed down from one to another, for he evidently alludes to what he had himself taught them, and his direction is not that that should be *handed down* by them, but that they should *obey* it.

7. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us. You know what you should do in order to imitate us. ¶ For we behaved not ourselves dis-

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought^a with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power,^b but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

a Ac.18.3; 20.34.

b 1 Co.9.6.

orderly among you; see Notes on 1 Thess. ii. 10.

8. *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought.* We were not supported in idleness at the expense of others. We gave a fair equivalent for all that we received, and, in fact, laboured for our own support; see Notes on 1 Thess. ii. 9.

9. *Not because we have not power,* &c.; see Notes on 1 Cor. ix. 6, 12, 14.

10. *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you.* It would seem from this that the evil of which the apostle here complains had begun to operate even when he was with them. There were those who were disposed to be idle, and who needed the solemn command of an apostle to induce them to labour. ¶ *That if any would not work, neither should he eat.* That is, at the public expense. They should not be supported by the church. This was a maxim among the Jews (see Wetstein, *in loc.*), and the same sentiment may be found in Homer, Demosthenes, and Pythagoras; see Grotius, *in loc.* The maxim is founded in obvious justice, and is in accordance with the great law under which our Creator has placed us; Gen. iii. 19. That law, in the circumstances, was benevolent, and it should be our aim to carry it out in reference to ourselves and to others. The law here laid down by the apostle extends to all who are able to work for a living, and who will not do it, and binds us *not* to contribute to their support if they will not labour for it. It should be regarded as extending (1.) to the members of a church—who, though poor, should not be supported by their brethren, unless they are willing to work in any

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that^c if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.^d

c Ge.3.19.

d 1 Ti.5.13; 1 Pe.4.15

way they can for their own maintenance. (2.) To those who beg from door to door, who should never be assisted unless they are willing to do all they can do for their own support. No one can be justified in assisting a lazy man. In no possible circumstances are we to contribute to foster indolence. A man might as properly help to maintain open vice.

11. *For we hear.* It is not known in what way this was made known to Paul, whether by Timothy, or by some other one. He had no doubt of its truth, and he seems to have been prepared to believe it the more readily from what he saw when he was among them. ¶ *Which walk disorderly;* Notes, ver. 6. ¶ *But are busy-bodies;* comp. Notes, 1 Tim. v. 13; 1 Pet. iv. 15. That is, they meddled with the affairs of others—a thing which they who have nothing of their own to busy themselves about will be very likely to do. The apostle had seen that there was a tendency to this when he was in Thessalonica, and hence he had commanded them to “do their own business;” 1 Thess. iv. 11. The injunction, it seems, had availed little, for there is no class of persons who will so little heed good counsel as those who have a propensity to intermeddle with the affairs of others. One of the indispensable things to check this is, that each one should have enough to do himself; and one of the most pestiferous of all persons is he who has nothing to do but to look after the affairs of his neighbours. In times of affliction and want, we should be ready to lend our aid. At other times, we should feel that he can manage his own affairs as well as we can do it for him; or if he cannot, it is his busi-

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, ^a and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, ¹ be not ^b weary in well doing.

ness, not ours. The Greek word used occurs only here, and in 1 Tim. v. 13; comp. Notes on Phil. ii. 4.

12. *Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus, &c.* A more solemn command and appeal to do what he had before enjoined on all of them; 1 Thess. iv. 11; see Notes on that verse.

13. *But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.* Marg., *faint not*. The Greek means, properly, to turn out a coward; then to be faint-hearted, to despond. The idea is, that they were not to be discouraged from doing good to the truly worthy and deserving by the idleness and improper conduct of some who asked their assistance. They were, indeed, shiftless and worthless. They would not labour; they spent their time in intermeddling with the concerns of their neighbours, and they depended for their support on the charity of others. The tendency of this, as all persons feel who have ever been applied to by such persons for aid, is, to indispose us to do good to *any*. We almost insensibly feel that all who ask for aid are of the same character; or, not being able to discriminate, we close our hands alike against all. Against this the apostle would guard us, and he says that though there may be many such persons, and though we may find it difficult to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy, we should not become so disheartened as not to give at all. Nor should we be weary though the applications for assistance are frequent. *They are* indeed frequent. God designs that they should be. But the effect should not be to dishearten us, or to make us weary in well-doing, but to fill us with gratitude—for it is a privilege to be permitted to do good. It is the great distinguishing characteristic of God that he always does

14 And if any man obey not our word by ² this epistle, note that man, and have ^c no company with him, that he may be ashamed

a Ep. 4 28. *1* or, *faint not*. *b* 1 Co. 15 56
2 or, *signify that man by an epistle*
Matt. 18. 17; ver. 6

good. It was that which marked the character of the Redeemer, that he "went about doing good;" and whenever God gives us the opportunity and the means of doing good, it should be to us an occasion of special thanksgiving. A man ought to become "weary" of everything else sooner than of evincing benevolence; comp. Notes on Gal. vi. 10.

14. *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle.* Marg., *or, signify that man by an epistle*. According to the marginal reading this would mean "signify, mark out, or designate that man to me by an epistle." The difference is merely whether we unite the words "by the epistle" with what goes before, or what follows. The Greek would admit of either construction (Winer, p. 93), but it seems to me that the construction in the text is the correct one, for (1.) the requirement was to proceed to discipline such a man by withdrawing from him; (2.) in order to do this it was not necessary that the case should be made known to Paul, for there was no supposable difficulty in it, and the effect would be only needless delay; (3.) Paul regarded the right of discipline as residing in the church itself, and did not require that cases should be referred to him to determine; see Notes on 1 Cor. v. 2—4. (4.) Though the Greek will admit of either construction, yet it rather favours this; see Oldhausen, *in loc.* ¶ *Note that man*. The word here used, means to mark; to sign; to note with marks; and the idea is, set such a mark upon him that he shall be shunned; that is, withdraw all Christian fellowship from him. ¶ *And have no company with him*. The Greek word here means, to mix up together; then to mingle together with; to have intercourse with. The idea is, that they were not

15 Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother. ^a

16 Now the Lord ^b or peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord *be* with you all.

17 The salutation ^c of Paul
^a Le. 19. 17.

to mingle with him as a Christian brother, or as one of their own number. They were not to show that they regarded him as a worthy member of the church, or as having a claim to its privileges. The extent of their discipline was, that they were to withdraw from him; see Notes on ver. 6, and Matt. xviii. 17; comp. 2 John 10, 11.

15. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. This shows the true spirit in which discipline is to be administered in the Christian church. We are not to deal with a man as an adversary over whom we are to seek to gain a victory, but as an erring brother—a brother still, though he errs. There was necessity for this caution. There is great danger that when we undertake the work of discipline we shall forget that he who is the subject of it is a brother, and that we shall regard and treat him as an enemy. Such is human nature. We set ourselves in array against him. We cut him off as one who is unworthy to walk with us. We triumph over him, and consider him at once as an enemy of the church, and as having lost all claim to its sympathies. We abandon him to the tender mercies of a cold and unfeeling world, and let him take his course. Perhaps we follow him with anathemas, and hold him up as unworthy the confidence of mankind. Now all this is entirely unlike the method and aim of

with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

18 The ^d grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

The second *epistle* to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

^b Ro. 16. 20. ^c 1 Co 16. 21. ^d Ro. 16. 24

discipline as the New Testament requires. There all is kind, and gentle, though firm; the offender is a man and a brother still; he is to be followed with tender sympathy and prayer, and the hearts and the arms of the Christian brotherhood are to be open to receive him again when he gives any evidence of repenting.

16. Now the Lord of peace. The Lord who alone can impart peace; see Notes on Rom. xv. 33; 1 Cor. xiv. 33; Heb. xiii. 20; John xiv. 27.

17. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand; Notes, 1 Cor. xvi. 21. ¶ Which is the token in every epistle. Gr., sign. That is, this signature is a sign or proof of the genuineness of the epistle; comp. Notes on Gal. vi. 11. ¶ So I write. Referring, probably, to some mark or method which Paul had of signing his name, which was well known, and which would easily be recognised by them.

18. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all; Notes, Rom. xvi. 20.

From the subscription to this epistle, it purports to have been "written from Athens." This is probably incorrect, as there is reason to think that it was written from Corinth. See the Introduction. At all events, this subscription is of no authority. See Notes at the end of the Epistles to the Romans and 1 Corinthians.